JOHN PASSMORE

Art Gallery of New South Wales

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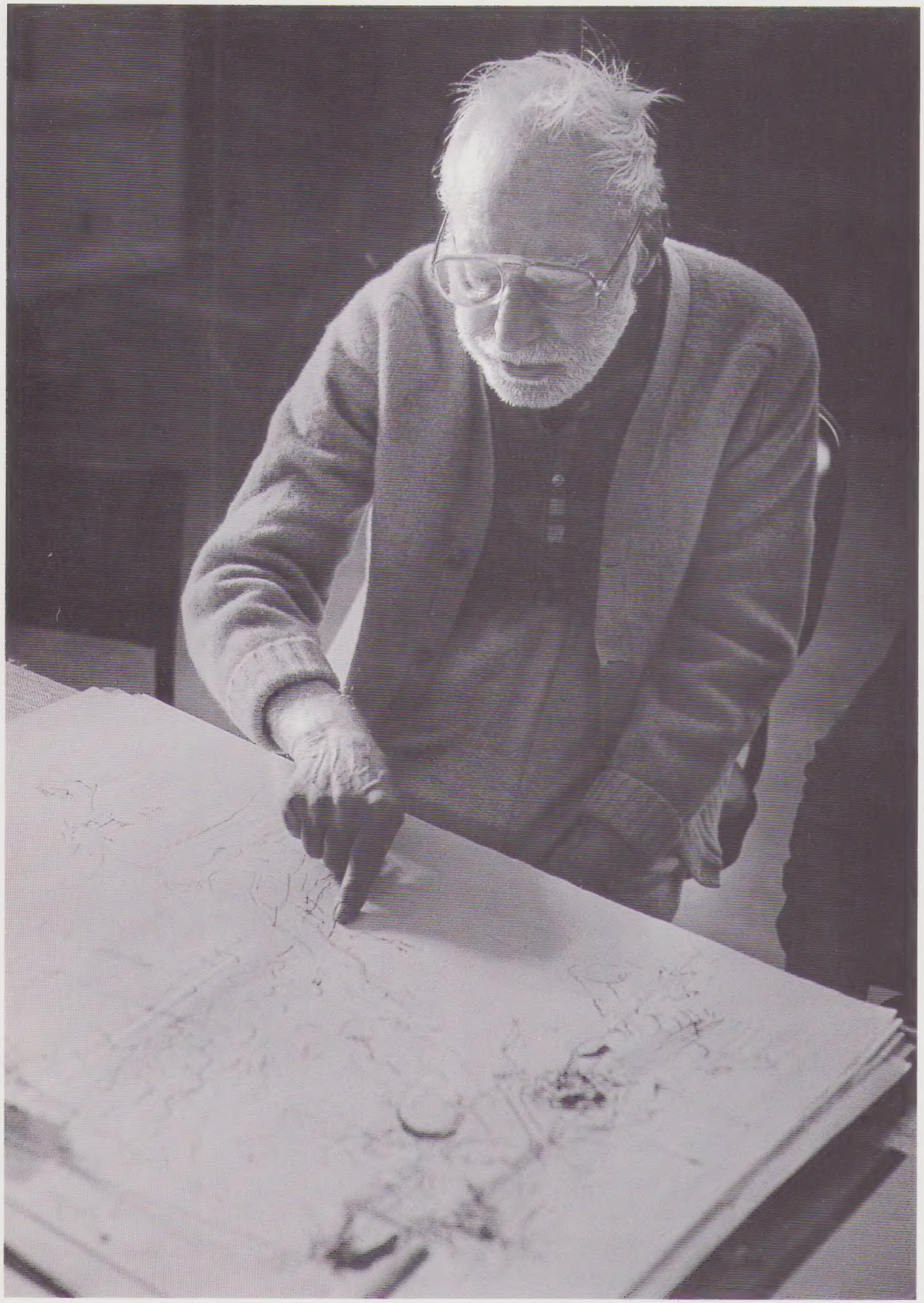

John Passmore 1984 *photograph by Kerry Dundas*

JOHN PASSMORE

1904-84

Retrospective

Barry Pearce

19 December 1984-10 February 1985

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Itinerary

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
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Foreword

The Passmore retrospective exhibition has for several years been planned and anticipated by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. However, John Passmore's profound scepticism of the social and official bureaucracy of the art world and, indeed, his deep reluctance to have his work publicly displayed over the past twenty years have thwarted and delayed the proposal.

Happily, toward the end of last year, John Passmore agreed to the exhibition being held, rightly feeling that the time had come for his work and his contribution to 20th-century Australian art to be seen and evaluated. We were at last given the opportunity to meet, discuss and consult with Passmore while he was still a virtual recluse and were thus able to unravel the intrigue of his long period of isolation.

Passmore has been intimately linked with Sydney through the poetry of his work and through his profound teaching influence. Indeed from his return to Australia in 1951 after many years in England, his effect on art students during the ensuing decade was of a richness we could safely say has scarcely been equalled since.

After holding back for so long, his enthusiasm for the retrospective was unrequited. Sadly and ironically, he died just over two months before the opening of this exhibition; the result of rapidly declining health during the year which necessitated his last months to be spent at a hospital, then at a nursing home in Sydney.

My gratitude is due to Barry Pearce, the Curator of Australian Art, who has endured complex and delicate arrangements in assembling the exhibition and preparing the catalogue; to Deborah Edwards who has been an admirable assistant in the task, and to all the staff at the gallery who have been involved.

We must also express our gratitude to the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for financial support toward the whole project.

I am particularly delighted that this exhibition is touring, for as it is the first major retrospective to be officially organised, and this catalogue the first monographic study on John Passmore, it is fitting that his achievement be seen as belonging not just to Sydney, but to the nation.

Edmund Capon
Director

. . .You ask how my dreams are. You know how much they are a fusion of imagination and reality — neither wholly real nor wholly imagination. The preference for a floor strewn with old paint tubes, ashes, dark corners and unmade beds are only like our lives — disorder, a sort of indolent chaos . . .I know you have no patience with too much irresolution — neither have I . . . I never in my moments of realistic reckoning imagine I will be a 'seller'. . .On the other hand confidence never deserts me about painting itself. I am very confident about my painting but I am not confident about selling them . . .

John Passmore, from a letter to Reg Jenkins, Northern Ireland, 23 April 1945

. . . Life for me is during these days a delicious vacuum. It is a vacuum because whether one lies in the sun or on one's bunk or draws or makes a long comb over of ideas, the days seem unreal and fantastic. They have the feeling of beating tom-toms, the beating away of time that is wound up with one's most primitive impulse — dreams have become realism at last and as much as I know it is all real. It is the beating of the dream that is what I know most. . . . I hope for sun this afternoon. I will be in the grass; today I don't feel like work — too much revolves round and round in my head.

John Passmore, from a letter to Reg Jenkins, Scotland, late 1945

Introduction

In 1944 John Passmore wrote "the greater part of things is what they are not; the thing is only a door that guides us in. Nature allows me the aesthetic shock of seeing the setting sun in a black mirror, but what I need is unconsciousness".

This statement was made when, at the age of forty, he had only recently found his direction as a painter.[1] It was a direction that would never lead to a satisfactory resolution as far as he was concerned. Neither the outward clothing of nature nor its underlying structure was to be of ultimate importance to him. What he wanted to probe was a psychic reality that lay in the enigmatic zone between art and life, an 'otherness' that could not be defined by conventional boundaries.

Art is a mystic vocation. Out of the complexity of Passmore's career, and what so often seems the contradictory make-up of his character, this singular conviction emerges. Such is the regard with which he held all the things and people that came within his sphere; the work of Cézanne, the lives of poets, writers and composers, his friends and students. Even the very act of painting. They were all beacons and fragmentary signs by which he could chart a solitary journey across the dark sea of his imagination.

A sense of mystery had been engendered in him as a child and amongst his earliest memories were those of his father reading to him Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*. Like Baudelaire, one of many writers and poets who were to enter Passmore's pantheon, he was to find in Poe's poem 'something deep and glistening like a dream, something mysterious and perfect like a crystal'. Passmore discovered here his first inkling of the artist's quest, in his own words, "To plunge into the depth of the abyss — heaven or hell, what does it matter?"[2]

But more importantly, thoughts of mystery were bound up with Passmore's earliest associations with Sydney. Born in 1904, he remembered at the age of seven watching from his balcony sailing skiffs straining against the wind off Milsons Point and Lavender Bay. His family's house was in a small street almost adjacent to where the north pylon of the Harbour Bridge now stands. It was a memory which became an irrevocable part of his imaginative world, for the waters of Sydney were the fundamental medium through which he would explore the creative process of painting and speculate on the subconscious secrets of existence.

Passmore's childhood was happy. His mother was steeped in the Catholic faith; his father a great romantic figure in his life. John Passmore, senior, was a gold prospector before settling in Sydney. Here he became a stevedore in charge of the 'Dead House', a warehouse on the wharf containing damaged freight held for inspection by the insurance companies. Passmore adored him. Raconteur of vivacity and warmth, he regaled the family nightly with stories of the sea and the outback, and no doubt this strong association through his father with the native pioneering spirit was a basis for Passmore's good relationship with Julian Ashton when he came to attend his school.

Both parents were perceptive of Passmore's artistic sensitivities and his father painted with him to give him encouragement. When Passmore went to Rushcutters Bay Primary School, he received his first formal drawing lessons in charcoal from the Inspector of Art. It was not to last long. At the age of thirteen his father allowed him to get a job and he left school to become a paint mixer for a signwriter. The head painter had gone to an art school and gave Passmore drawing lessons during his lunch hours, recounting his walks from Sydney to Kiama painting signs all the way along the railway line. Such characters were part of the milieu of the artist's early Australian life that he was to increasingly treasure as he grew older.

But Passmore wanted to become more than a signwriter. He grew interested in the idea of making large posters for theatre, having gone to the silent films and become entranced by their luminous graphic qualities. He secured a job with the John Sands lithographic firm and here met the artist George Lawrence, who was three years older. They worked at printing presses which turned out posters portraying the 'sirens' of the silent film industry. He and Lawrence applied to Julian Ashton to attend his night classes. They were both accepted and joined fellow students Herbert Badham and Rah Fizelle in 1918 or 1919.[3]

Passmore was to study at the Sydney Art School for the next fifteen years, but it was only in the final two years that he attended day classes. Having begun at the school, he found that he needed more money to buy painting materials. He therefore left Sands and found a job with Hall's — a furniture firm — at one pound a week, twice as much as he was earning as a litho apprentice.

After seven years' apprenticeship with Sands, George Lawrence went to work for Smith & Julius[4] and, through encouragement from Lawrence, Fizelle and Grace Crowley, Passmore prepared himself also to submit an application to the firm. He worked late at night to improve the commercial standard of his work and when he approached them he was signed on immediately, some time during the early 1920s. Meanwhile, important ideas and events were being absorbed by Passmore, whose mind was exceptionally receptive to anything that might shape his artistic life.

As an adolescent he visited Anthony Hordern's and became entranced with reproductions of two Velasquez paintings of princesses, including *The Infanta Margarita*, and saved enough money to buy them. The rapture over Velasquez so eloquently described in a later letter explains much

of that yearning which finally influenced his emigration from Australia in 1933: "When I was young and very susceptible — very full of reverence and very empty of criticism — I read a book on Velasquez. Velasquez painted, with brushes six feet long, the head of Philip that was just breathed onto the canvas by some miracle — nobody could say how he mixed his silvery greys. Those silvers raked my soul — just to be planted bodily to the Prado for one day to look and learn."[5] However, Passmore was never to visit Spain.

At this time he saw exhibited in Sydney the colour-music paintings of Roland Wakelin, whom he befriended at Smith & Julius, and Roy de Maistre. This exhibition was to stay in his mind for many years and it was probably an important basis of Passmore's musical reference in both his written notes and his schematic colour palettes over the ensuing decades.[6]

Passmore's early student years were indeed full of interest. 1916 had seen the first colour monograph on an Australian artist, J.J. Hilder, who died in that year. Concurrently the magazine *Art in Australia* was launched and the images of modern European painting were seeping into Sydney by way of the classes of Dattilo-Rubbo. Passmore developed a strong attachment to the work of Hilder and an interest in Norman Lindsay, whose work and persona as a native-born talent were to grow ever greater in fascination for him in later years.

It was usual for young artists of the 1920s at the Sydney Art School to be seeking the new, yet respecting the old: what Passmore referred to as 'the double edge'. This was the approach encouraged by George Lambert and Thea Proctor, both of whom had returned to Sydney in 1921. Although Passmore respected Lambert's great ability by which 'he lifted everybody to be ten per cent more than they were on their own', he later reflected that any idea of a modern movement at the time was an illusion. He felt Lambert had a persuasive ability to create an *esprit de corps*, but was basically a 'big fish in a little pond' who could not show the new way by example.[7]

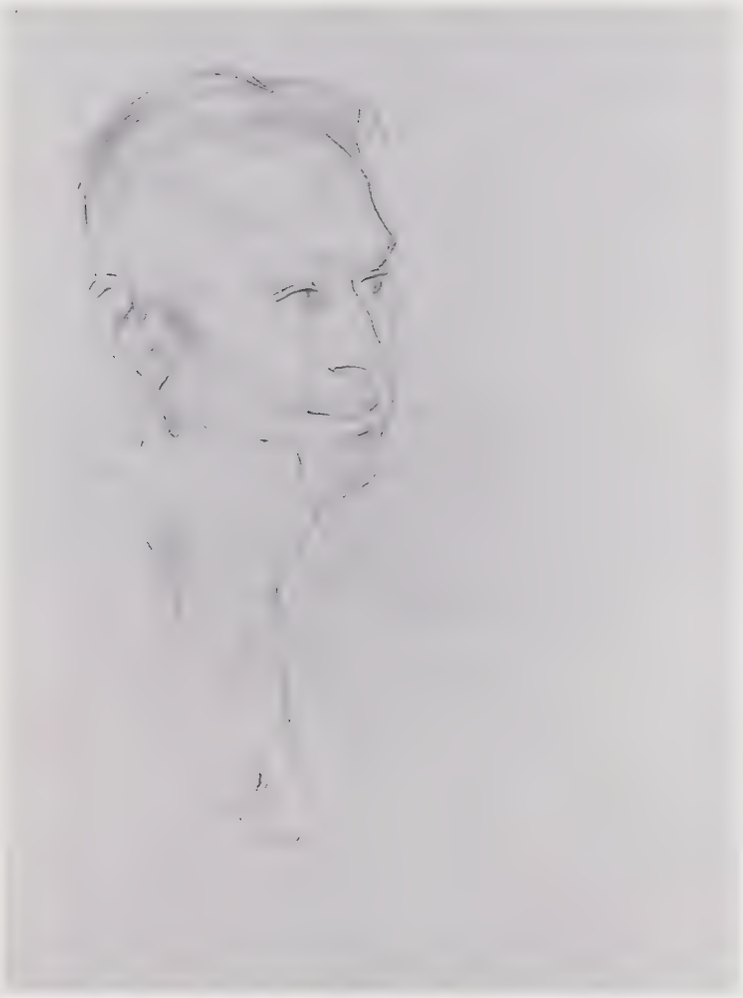
Passmore had a high regard for Julian Ashton as a man, but he needed more substantial models. Max Meldrum he viewed with circumspection, although fifty years later he was to say: "The best bet is something good to come out of Australian art will come out via Meldrum's theory . . . it hasn't emerged yet — it is there, latent."[8] Henry Gibbons was passing on the recipes of Lambert and therefore not teaching in a way that Passmore considered fruitful. What could he do?

Events conspired to determine Passmore's departure from Australia. De Maistre and William Dobell left in 1929, and reproductions were becoming more readily available at the Sydney Art School. These factors in their own way induced a greater urge to get away to experience the original works of the masters and to become immersed in a more stimulating atmosphere. Arthur Freeman remembers that by the late 1920s, when he started at the school, Passmore was already bursting with a strange restless fanaticism.[9]

There were two people in particular who made a practical contribution toward the possibility of Passmore going to England and surviving there. The first was Sydney Ure Smith who recognised the quality of the freelance layout work Passmore was producing for David Jones during the late 1920s. At Smith & Julius he had been employed alongside a talented designer named Neville Barker, who was a little older and who also did work for David Jones. Barker was intensely interested in French fashion, and together he and Passmore absorbed themselves in the commercial art reproduced in current French magazines, and in the work of the American 'pen men'. Passmore obtained work from Lever Bros in Sydney which, backed by Ure Smith, gave him a good reference to its mother branch Lintas, in London.[10] Such was his skill in commercial art that even today Arthur Freeman, who saw a lot of Passmore in the early 1930s, still thinks of his paintings in terms of his brilliant penchant for layout.

The other person to help Passmore was his drawing teacher, Adelaide Perry, for whom he had enormous respect. In 1933 he entered for the New South Wales Society of Artists scholarship with a portrait of his friend, Freeman. Freeman also entered, with a portrait of Passmore, and won the scholarship, which was awarded by George Bell. Passmore came second and the third place went to Jean Bellette. When Passmore decided to leave earlier than Freeman, Perry recommended him to a friend of hers at the Orient Company and arranged to get him a passage as one of the crew. He left on the *Oronsay* in April or May to work his way to England.

Passmore's departure was not without complications. He had married at the end of 1925 and his wife gave birth to a son five years later. Apparently an unhappy relationship from the beginning, it was part of a general atmosphere by which Passmore was experiencing an intolerable crushing of his talent. He left his family behind in 1933. A colleague at Lintas recalled Passmore telling him about the dreaded suburban life, and in particular, the slavery of the lawnmower: "In the end I picked up the bloody thing an' chucked it in the sea — then I got on a boat for London . . . I left them, the wife, the house, the lawn, but no bloody mower."[11] Once he was on board ship the main thing that mattered was the search for the new: "On the boat going over I could feel the world opening up . . . I was going to the world of art."[12]



Adelaide Perry *Portrait of John Passmore c 1933*
pencil 50.7 x 38.5 cm coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales

But important Australian art images went with him, to be nurtured in his mind for future development. There were the watercolours of Norman Lindsay with their nudes against glowing cascades of colour, which were to bear a relationship to Passmore's later paintings of bathers. Passmore also had a strong admiration for the early work of Streeton which he often studied in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. One particular painting by Sid Long had made a great impact: *Reflections, MacDonald River*, which the gallery purchased in 1931. Its luminous polychromatic palette and rich painterly surface provided an important key to Passmore's first serious approach to painting at the beginning of the Second World War. Moreover, the whole oeuvre of Long, from his early pantheistic themes of figures in the bush, to the vibrant poetry of his later landscapes, provides an interesting parallel with Passmore's paintings. There is a musical and romantic ambience in their use of pigment which links them closely.

In the year of his departure, Passmore went on an excursion to the Burragorang Valley with Freeman. His earliest extant landscape painting which comes from this trip (see p.10), exemplifies a quiet admiration for Elioth Gruner, an artist whom Passmore regarded with rare accord as a born painter.

When Passmore arrived in England in July 1933, he was met by Dobell. He stayed in Dobell's flat at Alexander Street, Bayswater for a few weeks. Each morning they would model for each other, and Passmore said that part of his motivation was a desperate curiosity to see what work 'the Slade student' was up to. Some of Dobell's sketches of Passmore at this time were later turned into paintings, but *The boy at the basin*, in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which many people think depicts Passmore, was already hanging in the Royal Academy when he arrived.

Dobell took him to Bond Street, the Tate and National Galleries and the Courtauld Institute, and for days on end they discussed the paintings and artists they had been looking at: El Greco, Tintoretto, Titian, Veronese, and in particular, Rembrandt. A set of people began to gather at Dobell's place in the ensuing months, mainly Australian artists, including Fred Coventry, Arthur Freeman and Jack Kilgour. Passmore admired Dobell but he had to find his own place to live. By the time Freeman had arrived in London toward the end of August, Passmore was already living close by at Kilgare Terrace in Bayswater. He stayed with Passmore for a while and soon took a room in the same building.

Financially things were tight, but life was very full for the two friends. Freeman was studying at the Royal Academy and Passmore was working at Lintas where he had started soon after his arrival. On Saturday nights they went to the pictures and weekends were taken up with visiting galleries, painting expeditions and sport. Passmore was avidly interested in boxing and cycling, and was also a proficient tennis player from Sydney days. It seems that he even went to the football in Chelsea but, like Walter Sickert at the music hall, was equally fascinated by the backs of people's heads as by the performance.[13]

There were visits to Paris; one eight-day visit in the spring of 1934 with Elaine Haxton and a friend of hers. Haxton and Passmore had met in the National Gallery. He also made numerous trips to Paris by himself on weekends. At the end of July, 1935 he and Freeman left London to spend two weeks in Germany, travelling along the Mosel painting out-of-doors and staying in youth hostels. Passmore remembered that it felt no different from being in France

except that the air was full of Hitler and the talk of an Aryan race.

An artist who influenced them greatly at this time was Sickert. They never met him, but no doubt saw his major loan exhibition at Agnew's in November 1933. His name also became a legend to Passmore through the Westminster School of Art. Obviously they did not yet grasp Sickert's studio theories, but Freeman says they admired his idea of painting swiftly to get down the essence of a subject. They never took the out-of-doors sketches they were doing at this time seriously and invariably destroyed them.

Some time before the war Freeman committed the unpardonable sin of getting married and the relationship of the two artists faded quickly. Passmore could not recognise the compatibility of marriage and art, and as far as he was concerned Freeman was no longer 'in it'. The break with Freeman was typical of many of Passmore's friendships throughout his life. Many who have been fond of him and understood him have had to accept Passmore as he is, full of contradictions: totally self-absorbed on the one hand, but capable of an enthusiasm of almost theatrical proportions, on the other. Freeman loved Passmore's fanaticism but puzzled over his low regard for other people, and especially his peculiar lack of response to his surroundings. Whilst they walked through London, Freeman marvelling at the buildings and streets, Passmore appeared to be completely immersed in his own thoughts as if in a trance. Even in the dazzling environment of Paris it was the same.

Two friends who remained attached to Passmore over many years, and were happy to do so on his terms, were Paul Haefliger and Jean Bellette, his fellow students at the Sydney Art School, who came to London to study at the Westminster School of Art. The three of them went on a trip to Italy and the South of France in 1937 or 1938 which lasted three or four months. It was one of the happiest sojourns of Passmore's life as they absorbed themselves in the frescos of Masaccio in Florence, Signorelli in Orvieto, the paintings of the great Venetian artists in Venice and especially a pilgrimage to Cézanne's house and the countryside in the South of France.

On La Cote Bleue they stayed at a village called Sausset-les-Pins, nestled by gentle hills and containing an intimate harbour with small jetties and fishing boats. It was probably here that Passmore's first serious ideas for composing paintings took shape, with figures bending in the shallows pulling in their nets, stabilised by the horizontal lines of the jetty behind them. In one drawing of the subject, repeated many times on tracing paper, he inscribed the words: "The thing is to compose. Nothing else matters but compose." Blended with his memories of Sydney, this was

John Passmore *Burragorang Valley 1933*
oil on wood 28.5 x 35.2 cm private collection

to have an important bearing on his work when he returned to Australia, even though he had yet to go through the baptism of Cézanne. The reverie of the time is summarised by a postcard from the Haefligers who revisited the village in 1961: "Here we are again . . . thinking of you. It has changed a bit since we were here . . . but still the heart moves faster. So here we are drinking a little 'cote de Provence' to you, to us, to Sausset and to the past." Jean added a little postscript: "I can see you still sunning yourself on this sand — trying to escape us."[14]

There were many Australian artists in London during the 1930s as well as those already mentioned, including Hal Missingham, Eric Wilson, Wallace Thornton, Donald Friend, Nora Heysen and Jack Carrington-Smith. Passmore made contact with most of them but his involvement with Haefliger and Bellette was the last of any intimacy with Australians in London. Haefliger, with his aristocratic background, saw something in Passmore that he would have liked in himself: the vitality of the intelligent peasant. Passmore came to respect Haefliger as a critic, but never thought he had the makings of a real painter, a thing he felt rather sad about: "Paul was a follower of me and he could only follow a certain distance . . . I was getting more and more on my own feet and the more I got on my own feet the less I wanted to share it with anybody else."[15] Bellette recollected that on that European trip, all three of them jealously guarded their private discoveries. With Passmore this was to become more

than a passing fetish: "I strongly believed that it is only by being mean and keeping your things to yourself that you could become strong."[16]

During Passmore's first six years in England he worked hard to take in all the things that were feeding his mind and synthesise them into a direction. It was similar to what was happening to Dobell, except that his focus was on life, whereas Passmore's was on art. It was not possible for this to happen without ruthlessness; he soon discarded many Australian artists whom he had associated with during the first few years in London. Much later he came to regret his past treatment of people: "As soon as I got beyond the first stage in my Australian friendships, I dashed them to pieces by being hungry for the new . . . and it wounded every one of them . . . I wounded more people than you could count."[17] In 1942 he wrote: "Painting is first, friendship the second."[18]

During all this time Passmore had not by his own definition really begun as a painter. He was slowly working up to a theoretical approach by a process of assimilation, but his breakthrough finally came through his immersion in the English art world. The entreé to this world was effected by his employment at Lintas, then widely regarded as the most distinguished and creative company outside the United States for the employment of commercial artists.

Passmore began work at Lintas in 1933, not long after his arrival in London. Here he met some remarkable people. Ivor Cooper, his managing director, had an enormous enthusiasm for art and was strongly supportive of individuals who were trying to develop themselves as artists apart from the work they were committed to doing for the company. Private studio time and leave of absence were generously accorded, and one ex-employee of Lintas remembers that Cooper may have actually sponsored Passmore on a trip to Venice to study painting.[19] There is no corroboration to this story — perhaps it is confused with the trip to Italy with the Haefligers — but certainly Passmore gained the greatest respect of his colleagues as a highly creative individual who should be helped to develop his talent as much as possible, even if that meant simply leaving him alone.

He was perceived at first as a shy, introspective person who preferred to keep to himself. Later he became guru-like and, to some, an awesome character in the trenchancy of his long silences and penetrating observations. Geoffrey Wadlow, who started at Lintas in May 1936, remembers that Passmore would work on the inside middle drawer of his desk rather than the top, so that he could quickly hide what he was doing if anyone approached. Like nearly everyone else he found that one could not get very close to Passmore, but that somehow he commanded admiration. Passmore's English colleagues were perfectly tolerant of his strange ways and there were two men in particular who took a great liking to him, forming friendships with him which were the most important of all his years in England. They were the painter Keith Vaughan and Passmore's art director, Reg Jenkins.

Passmore was always attracted to eccentric personalities: people who were above the average, intense, larger-than-life, or living on the edge in pursuit of their muse. Vaughan was certainly in this category. He started work at Lintas in 1931 at the age of nineteen. Soon after Passmore arrived they had a desk next to each other and became close friends. Vaughan too was painting in his spare time and, although he was eight years younger than Passmore, their creative endeavours began to bear fruit at roughly the same time.

Vaughan idolised Passmore and, to a certain extent, Passmore reciprocated his affection. After the younger artist had left Lintas in 1939, Passmore told another colleague, Richard Wilson, "I owe him a lot — in a paradise of fools, one ray of merit is something to thank God about."[21] Recently, his regard remained unequivocal: "The biggest influence of anyone in my life."[22] He recalled also Vaughan's vivacity, his love of music and his wonderful mobility at dancing, a theatrical trait that had great appeal for Passmore: "It was such a brilliant thing. He was very close to a Diaghilev dancer. He almost influenced me to play the piano."[23] But perhaps he owed more than anything else to Vaughan his guidance away from the vocation of fashion artist and back toward that of a painter. Freeman recalls that in his early Lintas days Passmore's brilliant inventiveness in layout was quickly recognised, and that he was bringing home various American magazines to hone his talent for an approach to some of the top fashion houses in London. Vaughan certainly helped to steer Passmore back to the path of the great modern French painters and to the altar of their gods: Picasso, particularly of his 'blue period', and Cézanne.

The influence of Vaughan, however, does not overshadow that of two teachers under whom Passmore studied at the Westminster School of Art, where he enrolled for night classes in drawing in about 1934. Vaughan, with his youth, energy and talent, represented to Passmore a sense of newness against an art scene in England which he regarded as generally fairly dreary. Moreover, Vaughan was a fellow-traveller in the same spiritual quest, not a mentor. That mantle was preserved for Bernard Meninsky and Mark Gertler at the Westminster School, and their effect on Passmore was considerable. Both were of that highly strung nature which, to him, gave them a magnetic quality. Each, like Vaughan, was to die eventually by his own hand.[24]

Passmore saw more of Meninsky than Gertler, but the latter was equal, if not greater, in his impact. From one Passmore gained in intellectual strength and from the other a reinforcement of that self-absorption he required to be an artist. Meninsky told Passmore that to be an intelligent painter he must read books. He had already been helped in this regard by Julian Ashton who had suggested he read George Moore's *Confessions of a young man*, where the dilemma of a man choosing between the careers of writing and painting possibly reflected his own state of mind.[25]

Jean Bellette had got him to read Dostoyevsky, and now with Meninsky, a richer world of literature opened up to him in the works of writers, poets, philosophers and artists: Goethe, Rilke, Tolstoy, Chekov, Eliot, Delacroix, Plato and others. Although sceptical of those he would call 'readers' as opposed to 'painters', reading, or at least gleaning the essence of great writers by discussion, became for Passmore a key part of his investigation that paralleled painting and drawing, and it may be that he got from Meninsky the idea of noting down quotations. It was a habit that developed much more intensely later in his life, mixing what he had read and heard with what he formulated himself. He shared with Meninsky, too, a tendency for self-analysis by which he became an obsessional observer of his mental and physical health as well as artistic development. Both were passionately moved by classical music.

On the practical side, Meninsky encouraged Passmore to firm his sense of contour, volume and construction in drawing the nude. The drawings that he made at this time are not concerned with composition related to the shape of paper he was working on but rather, construction of the figure within itself; how the parts fit and flow together. Students of Meninsky recall the intensity of concentration in the act of drawing that was inculcated in his classes, and on a number of Passmore's sheets are the characteristic drawings of the model made by his teacher, to one side of the pupil's version. Meninsky also suggested that Passmore make drawings after the sculptures of Egyptian and Greek antiquity in the British Museum, and after the work of the French sculptor Aristide Maillol. This Passmore did studiously and Freeman remembers that when Passmore seized on a few poses that appealed to him, he repeated them endlessly.

Meninsky had a great admiration for Cézanne, but his own work reflected more the neo-classical period of Picasso, and beyond that the Florentine painters of the Italian quattrocento, Masaccio and Piero della Francesca. This was no doubt partly the basis for Passmore's visit to Italy in 1937 but, although he responded strongly to the early Florentines, it was Michelangelo and the Venetians who were to provide a greater resonance for the romantic tendency that was deeply imbedded within him.

If Passmore found in Meninsky a didactic and intellectual confirmation of where to direct his investigations, in Gertler he saw — even though he found his work wanting in inspiration — the very personification of how he could be as an artist. "Mark Gertler was striving more for doing his own modern work . . . he always seemed to be in a trance, thinking inside himself what he was painting on, and going on with that while he worked in the class . . . this is the sort of thing that is more valuable than the delineation of the thing in paint . . . someone who was within himself an artist. And this had a great effect on me. Up to that time I suppose I thought that the thing about art was just art, that's what you put down. But of course the things that the masters put down were themselves. I had a touch of this with Keith Vaughan and then with these two teachers at Westminster School."[26]

By the late 1930s Passmore had well and truly saturated himself: he had read, listened, looked and thought to such an extent that any hope of moving forward might have imploded had he not been given the right circumstances to begin painting seriously. These circumstances were provided by his art director at Lintas, Reg Jenkins.

During the 1930s Jenkins had bought a house, Gooseberry Cottage, in Suffolk. His wife Marjorie, and their two sons went to live there. She was a painter who had met her husband when they were students at St. Martin's School of Art. Jenkins stayed at the cottage on weekends and it became a haven for many of the art circle which centred at Lintas. This beautiful house with its thatched roof, nearby cornfields and apple orchard (see cat. 10 and 11), was close to both Gainsborough and Constable country, and from Passmore's first visit it found a place in his inspiration that was to remain for the rest of his life. Indeed Passmore's relationship with the Jenkins family provided an affection and warmth of domesticity that he had not had since childhood and which he was never to have again.

In the early spring of 1940 he was given a room of his own in the cottage where he could paint full-time for a year, for Reg Jenkins suggested that he leave Lintas, offering to support him along with the rest of the family. It was one of those rare times in Passmore's life when he could create his inner sanctum with a nurturing atmosphere he completely trusted and with people who obviously cared for him.

In the previous year he had been living in a house in Warwick Crescent, near Little Venice, and although beginning to paint there, including views from his window and from an island that stood in the centre of the canal, the loneliness he felt seemed to impede his momentum (see

cat. 2). He wrote to Richard Wilson: "On the canal outside my window lies the whole universe — it simply teems with themes and motifs."[27] Later he wrote to Reg Jenkins: "When I was by the canal . . . one other feeling was always with me — I can't tell you the weight of that loneliness. By the canal I could try a canvas but never lost Mr L . . . In one's own life and in lives of a few that one gets to know there is something incomparable to any book — it is trivial yet has the breath of life in it. There's you, there's Marjorie, there's Keith — there is a struggle there I would not expect to find in Jean Christopher — it is deeper than explanation, it is *sine qua non* again, that is the way I am."[28] These were the words of a man savouring his solitude and independence, yet craving contact and companionship.

At Gooseberry Cottage Cézanne reigned supreme. Passmore had previously followed more closely the work of Picasso, diligently copying some of his images in pencil and emulating him in a few small paintings, but he needed something more disciplined and systematic. He began to read everything about Cézanne that he could find: two important sources were Roger Fry's study on the artist published in 1927 and Bernard Grasset's French edition of the letters published in Paris in 1937. The letters were translated by Richard Wilson who, whilst convalescing for several months from March 1939, sent them to Passmore in batches. Using the later works of Cézanne as a key, he began to paint portraits of Marjorie Jenkins and himself, landscapes within walking distance of the cottage and invented compositions with nudes in cloistered forest landscapes reminiscent of the late bathers paintings of the French master.

However, the demon of synthesis could not stop Passmore noticing things at a tangent to the direction he was going. Reg Jenkins showed him books on the works of Gainsborough and Constable and he took an interest in seeing their works at the National Gallery, particularly the Constables at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He also began to enthuse over the watercolours of Cotman and Girtin and even copied drawings by Gainsborough in pen and brown ink.

He became captivated by the fact of being in the heart of English landscape painting country and the idea of somehow identifying himself with the lives and presence of great artists so that he might glimpse the means of their 'magic'. There was also a sneaking regard for what the riddle of opposites might show him, such as the comparison of Cézanne with the English landscape school. "Gooseberry Cottage was half-way between Constable's country, which was in Dedham Vale to the north-east, and Gainsborough's country which was in the opposite direction. It was a rural thing you see. But the character of Cézanne wasn't a rural thing . . . the character of Cézanne was one of learning to paint . . . There's two things about Cézanne — you can imitate him as much as you like and you can fall flat on your face . . . what you have to do is study him as deeply as he studied himself."[29]

In following his own dictum Passmore discovered something very important to him which was partly gleaned from a careful reading of Roger Fry. Where many artists had gone astray with Cézanne was that they had created out of him an assertiveness and therefore a self-deception. Passmore, however, found that what mattered was not what Cézanne defined, but what he did *not* define. The romantic symbolist in him sensed an untouched mystery. "Never state," he said.[30]

Marjorie Jenkins recalled the regime that Passmore set himself at the cottage: "He worked continuously producing enormous numbers of sketches. Then, every so often, he dug a hole in the garden at Gooseberry Cottage and set fire to piles of discarded work. Working out-of-doors, on a variety of scales, some of his paintings were quite large. He produced a great range — landscapes, portrait sketches, still lifes, abstracts, usually in oil or in pencil, chalk or pen and ink, perhaps with a colour wash.

"He had a passion for work and would work incessantly throughout the day, rarely pausing except for thought. No-one would have dreamed of interrupting him, only really talking to him when they seemed to have been given the go-ahead. Although he ate very little, he would go to bed as early as 7 o'clock in the evening in order to preserve himself for the next day's painting.

"On the whole he severly neglected himself and there was nothing that anyone could do about this — this led to a few minor breakdowns and general poor health. He seemed to feel that true artists were a race apart and as such he strove for the highest ideals. His interest in painting was backed up by a thirst for literature and classical music, in particular, Beethoven and Mozart, but also some Brahms and latterly Berlioz."[31]

This period at the cottage came to an end when Passmore was conscripted to the Royal Air Force in early 1941. He was suddenly swept into the reality of the effect of the war on everyday life. His health was not good and he was not happy about this situation, but he accepted it as fate. At first posted briefly to Scotland, he was then moved to various parts of Britain during the following five years, including Worcestershire, Yorkshire, Ireland and finally Scotland. He tried to get back to Gooseberry Cottage as often as he could during leave, or weekends when he was stationed closer to London and later he stayed at the

Jenkins's studio in Chelsea. But inevitably, the war period was a severe disruption to his painting.

Life in the armed services for Passmore was desolate and monotonous. His tasks included folding parachutes and flying in planes looking for submarines, but by and large, because of his health, he was assigned to general cleaning and mess duties. It was not an entirely unproductive period, for what has survived is a large number of remarkable letters encapsulating, amongst many other things, his recollections and art criticisms. They are amongst the most interesting letters of any Australian artist, intimately revealing the workings of his imaginative intellect with a sensitivity close in spirit to Rilke, the German poet he admired so highly.

Reg and Marjorie Jenkins sent him books and articles and he wrote back to discuss what he had read. He extemporised about his working methods: "Meanwhile, I work a little by imagination — before nature one concedes too much to the outward eye — a warning and a lesson to myself."[32] If he was brutally honest with himself, he was no less so with his friends, and he expressed his concern over the developments in Keith Vaughan's work during the war. Vaughan was associating with Graham Sutherland and the neo-romantic movement in English painting; he was also selling his work by exhibiting with a commercial gallery. On both counts Passmore disapproved.

Near the end of the war Reg Jenkins offered him again the chance of working full-time at Gooseberry Cottage. Looking forward to his demobbing from Scotland, he began to think about the things he might paint: ". . . the rain, the dark clouds, the half-hearted orange blears that promise and the prospect at the cottage of autumn and winter and lastly the name Constable which seems to be saying something every time I've seen it lately. This morning a ground mist hung over the cut fields and the sun rose a golden ball golder than I ever remember, laying great slashes of pure gold light on the tree trunks, but the cold was bitter, frozen hands, it is a problem to get at it with paints."[33]

These letters also contain intimations of Passmore's return to Australia. His mother died in 1942 and he expressed the wish to see his father. He began to think about what it would be like to be an Australian artist back in his country of birth. In another evocative letter written from Scotland he said: ". . . I have seen two of the most beautiful evenings ever — flower-like, as beautiful as a rose; one pink, one a pale yellowish apricot — still I can only hold them in my memory until they fade . . . One of my mates here came across a book on Australia, illustrated with paintings . . . I see and feel what it would be like to go back — as an artist . . . I hang my head, but I know I will lift it up again. I wish you good luck — whatever I appear to be, depressed, disconsolate, it is nothing, I have the sun inside and I am exultant."[34]

After the war Passmore returned to Gooseberry Cottage for another year, taking up from where he had left in 1940, and developed spasmodically over five years. 1946 was the year of the great Picasso/Matisse exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum but, unlike Vaughan, Passmore's work was not discernibly affected by it. A return to Australia was now firmly in his thoughts and one of the things he passionately wanted to do there was paint and draw from the nude. He also thought that the warm climate might be more conducive to his health. It was necessary to save some money for the passage and therefore in 1947 Passmore returned to London to work at Lintas for another four years.

At first he moved back to another flat near the Little Venice Canal in Maida Vale, also staying for a time at the Jenkins's studio in Chelsea. In 1948 Keith Vaughan moved into a large house in Hamilton Gardens, St. John's Wood, which he shared with John Minton and Robert Colquhoun. At some stage Dylan Thomas lived there and Passmore was also given a room. Then late in 1950 Passmore corresponded with Henry Gibbons at the Julian Ashton School in Sydney to negotiate a teaching appointment. He did not go back to Gooseberry Cottage, having taken most of his paintings with him in 1947, but he left a group behind in memory of where he had 'learned to paint'. In December 1950 he sailed from England after seventeen years away from Australia.

Passmore arrived in Sydney in January 1951 and began teaching at the Julian Ashton School at the beginning of that year. There was an immediate effect on the students who came under his charge. He was a dose of pure oxygen. And there was no delay at getting on with his work. The reticent, analytical nature of the paintings of the previous decade, with their delicately probing facets of pigment, became absorbed into a more confidently experimental approach.

The breadth and drama of the old masters that he wanted to infuse into his Australian work was attempted first in the painting *Boy and seabird* (cat. 14, 1951). But whereas he was able to get a narrative power fairly easily into his drawings, it was not achieved so well in this self-conscious, disjointed painting. The work is a fascinating insight into Passmore's attempt at compositional synthesis. Bringing together memory, experience and symbolic imagery, it was based on his childhood memory of Lavender Bay and the Domain swimming baths at Woolloomooloo, and blended with recollections of the fishing village he visited with the Haefligers in the South of France in the late 1930s. Also, amongst some of his early drawings copied after Picasso in London, is a near-abstracted motif of the head of a boy

being attacked by a bird, which is certainly the basis for the right-hand side of the painting. The motif was repeated on several sheets, and then in a small painting, indicating that Passmore had mulled over the image for a long time.

In Passmore's beach paintings and drawings, birds became black, nemesis-like progenies of Poe's raven, hovering above the figures or attacking them in silent fury. In 1978 Passmore told James Gleeson of *Boy and seabird* that: "the essence of all the sea paintings and drawings is the element of fear. Whenever I dived or swam there was always the fear of sharks or other less definite dangers."[35] A major painting of this series belonging to Wallace Thornton was burnt in a railway carriage fire in 1956 whilst in transit to Melbourne for an Olympic Games exhibition.

Boy and seabird prompts speculation also on the influence of Keith Vaughan. Noel Ripley recalls that when Passmore came back to Lintas after the war he appeared to be less interested in Cézanne and more taken up with what Vaughan was doing, particularly when they were living in the same house shortly before Passmore left London.[36] Much to Passmore's relief, Vaughan had abandoned his English neo-romantic interests and moved once again into the slipstream of Picasso and Matisse. He had a one-man exhibition at Reid and Lefevre in London in 1948 which resolutely signified his return to the constructive style that had been foreshadowed by tentative cubist drawings he and Passmore were doing at Lintas during the 1930s.

Ripley remembers that Passmore was making what appeared to be abstract drawings in the style of Vaughan in the late 1940s, but did not see any paintings. Apparently none of these drawings have survived, but it is reasonable to assume that Vaughan's 1948 exhibition had something to do with the formulation of *Boy and seabird*.

It is even more probable that Vaughan had a strong influence on the basic idea of one of Passmore's most ambitious paintings *The miraculous draught of fishes* (cat. 20, 1952), which he entered for the Blake Prize for religious art at the beginning of 1952. This large, powerful work, where Passmore came closest to his beloved masters of the High Renaissance, contains a sombre resonance and grandeur that was not inspired by religion. Its romantic spirit is more appropriately linked to a great French image of the 19th century by the agency of Vaughan, who presented a pair of paintings in his 1948 exhibition based on the theme of Gericault's *The Raft of the Medusa*. In one of these two works Vaughan has assembled a group of figures on a simple platform against an almost vacant field of sea and sky. It is a heroic image suffused with melancholy.

The miraculous draught of fishes, which had its genesis in a pen and ink sketch on a small envelope,[37] similarly raises

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to heroic proportions a fatalistic view of human existence. As in so many of Passmore's paintings and drawings of the period, his human figures hunch over with heads down, as if vaguely conscious of the cosmic mud from which they have emerged and to which they must inevitably return. The flimsy structures upon which they stand are all that separate them from the oblivion of the vast flux of the unknown. In the following year Passmore painted another large work of an ostensibly religious subject *The Baptism* (cat. 23, 1953). More austere and abstract in its monumentality, it was later purchased for the Mertz collection.

Passmore's first few years back in Australia were prolific. As well as the works discussed, he produced many small, beautiful paintings and a wealth of drawings on the theme of bathers and marine subjects which caused a stir of

enthusiasm in the Sydney art world. His views on exhibiting remained the same and the obsession with privacy contributed much to his aura, so that what people could manage to glimpse of his work magnified their curiosity. But they had a chance to see what he was doing in a small retrospective of twenty-six paintings arranged by the Macquarie Galleries in November 1951, an exhibition that Paul Haefliger, by then the *Sydney Morning Herald* critic, termed 'magnificent'.

Haefliger's remarks came from a long understanding of Passmore's character as well as a careful scrutiny of his paintings: "Cézanne creates unity from chaos; Passmore prefers chaos, so that the forms only partly emerge in the cubist manner." He went on to question the timidity of Passmore's realisation, and whether the intellectual rigour of his approach was ultimately suitable for a temperament which was fundamentally that of a romantic.[38] James Gleeson recognised this point more acutely: ". . . one feels that beneath the logical facade of these Cézanne-like paintings there is a turbulent spirit who embraces the restraint of a highly intellectual style as a safeguard against emotionalism. They are shot through with the dark tones of a macabre imagination . . ."[39]

The students under Passmore at the Julian Ashton School began to flourish and a number of them were to become prominent, in one way or another, in the Sydney art world, including Peter Upward, John Olsen, John Henshaw and William Rose. Rose stayed with Passmore's classes only briefly, rejecting what he considered to be the viewpoint of a 19th-century artist inappropriately placed in a technological era. In a sense he was right, for Passmore himself often rued the fact that he was not born in another time and place where the living presence of greater talents might have brought out something better in him. Rose wanted nothing to do with the past. There was no salvation in it. But to the other students the presence of Passmore was almost that of a messiah.

John Henshaw and John Olsen have a vivid recollection of Passmore's lessons from those years: how he analysed, through drawing, the transition from archaic Greek sculpture to the sense of movement of the figure that came in the Golden Age; how he explained the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt and broke up the figure into segments so that it would be capable of structural life when given the rhythm of light and shade. Related to this was the method he advocated from Sickert of laying in a painting with a grisaille of terre-verte and ultramarine, and his Sickert-like use of gesture to create a narrative quality. Other students remember different things: the systematic palette, set out like a musical scale and which was almost like a work of art itself; the still-life exercises; the excursions around the parks of Sydney; and the essays to be read, for example, T.S. Eliot's *Tradition and the individual talent*.[40]

Others again remember nothing in particular except an overwhelming inspiration to become a good artist, a thinking artist. These are the memories that Passmore imbued in his students throughout his teaching life: the discussions, the silences, the gloom of failure, the exaltation of discovery. Not every student responded, but he was for most of them an inspiration; a born teacher.

Passmore did a lot of work at the Julian Ashton School in 1951–54. The private studio which Henry Gibbons gave him was locked up and separated from the students by a high wooden partition, so that his paintings would not have any influence on their styles. The school was then on the floor above the Mining Museum in George Street North. From his window (see cat. 13), Passmore could see the Harbour across Millers Point and he painted directly from the motif a series of works of extraordinary subtlety, exemplifying his supreme sense of tone in colour and his delicate handling of pigment (cat. 29, 30 and 31).

Comparison of these works with Cézanne may be made, but can only be superficial. Robert Hughes said: "*Millers Point* does not give us a world of structure, nor do we feel that we are looking at the Harbour from a fixed point. The landscape is seen, as it were, from the centre. There is nothing soft or indecisive about the play of its forms. Yet they do not add up to a cumulative structure. They confront us with a world of subtly differing resistances."[41]

The most beautiful of all these paintings is in the Joseph Brown collection (cat. 31, 1953). Its rapturous evocation of harbour and early evening sky makes it one of the finest works of his career. It is ironic that he could produce such a work *sur-le-motif* when he had determined such a theoretical approach that was not much based on the transient appearances of nature. Given the kind of situation which he felt sanctified his privacy, he might have produced more paintings in this manner. In Scotland in 1945 he had given it a try but became neurotic about intrusions: "But to work without privacy scares me. I have tried a few times from my billet which overlooks the bay, but a footstep in the passage, the fear that the door might be opened and when it does makes it all impossible."[42]

The Julian Ashton School was finding it difficult to keep up with inflating wages and Passmore struggled to maintain a subsistence from his employment there. Half-way through 1953 he supplemented his income by some part-time teaching (which he got through the help of Jean Bellette) at The Kings School, Parramatta. A year later he passed the job on to Jeffrey Smart. Meanwhile he was pre-

paring to go to Newcastle Technical College to teach for a compulsory eighteen months before he could transfer to the National Art School at East Sydney Technical College. He moved up there in the middle of 1954.

His eighteen months at Newcastle proved to be a richly productive period. The art department was run by the sculptor Paul Beadle and Passmore harmonised well with the staff and students. He lived in a room at the Star Hotel opposite the college. He also had a small private room at the college which he used as a studio. Given a large amount of independence and freedom under Beadle he was able to do a lot of painting, even though he came back to his flat in Sydney in holiday periods and on many weekends. He loved going to Lake Macquarie and spent much time at the Newcastle wharves, observing fishermen and boats.

He would not make sketches on the spot, but did many from memory when he returned to the studio, perhaps up to four figures from one excursion which he would then work up into larger drawings and oil paintings. He would tell students that one must be able to 'push the figures around'. Other students recalled that in his drawing class instructions he would emphasise the drawing of the skeleton rather than the flesh. Passmore finally got his transfer to East Sydney Technical College at the end of 1955 and began teaching there from the beginning of the following academic year, but the atmosphere he had absorbed and the work he had done at Newcastle was to sustain him for a very long time.

Back in Sydney Passmore became a key figure in a historic year there for painting. The disruptive changes which were taking place up to 1956 amongst his most talented ex-students at the Julian Ashton School began to make an impact on him. His own philosophy, which encouraged the idea of unconsciousness and psychic experience in art practice, was nursemaid to a resurgence of abstract painting which he then contributed to but never really felt comfortable with. There had been an abstract movement based on constructive principles in Sydney in the late 1930s which virtually disappeared as a force after the war, when the intimist modes practised by artists mainly connected with the Sydney Group became dominant.

Now abstract painting found a new focus and voice in an exhibition called *Direction 1* organised at the Macquarie Galleries in December 1956. It was different from the earlier abstraction which, through the efforts of Ralph Balson, Frank Hinder, Grace Crowley and Rah Fizelle, aimed to quantify the dynamics of nature in a systematic way that paralleled the investigations of science. *Direction 1* had no such definition or discipline.

It was the brainchild of Passmore's most precocious student John Olsen. The group comprised, along with Olsen and Passmore, William Rose, Eric Smith and Robert Klippel. Klippel had returned to Australia in 1950, having lived and worked in London and Paris for three years, and brought something of his experience of surrealism and what he had seen of international art into the scene. But the most recent catalyst was an exhibition of contemporary French paintings in Sydney in March 1953. To Klippel this exhibition was a little tame after Paris. However, most Sydney artists got their first glimpse of works by Manessier, Soulages, da Silva, Leger, Picasso, Matisse and Chagall.

Olsen began to talk excitedly about the new possibilities, and just as he had with Vaughan twenty years earlier, Passmore responded to the younger man's freshness and energy: "Olsen was tenacious and a very good thinker . . . he said a totally new way of seeing things has taken over . . . .it's got a completely new lot of rules now . . . you are not looking at nature at all. You are looking at a theory about painting. What one does is a painting. It is not nature at all. He seized on that . . . I had my old way and Olsen's new way, and for a while they did get mixed up with one another."[43]

Olsen had rejected the inclusion of Melbourne artists Leonard French and John Brack in *Direction 1*, and he and the other Sydney artists depended on Passmore as the anchorman who had already established a sound reputation. Passmore exhibited just three paintings in the show, after producing several purely abstract works in the new spirit during that year. He had acquired a copy of the June 1955 issue of *XX^e siecle*, dominated by the work of contemporary Italian painters. This much-thumbed issue reproduced works by Santomaso, Birolli, da Silva, Corpora, Magnelli and Manessier, which bore striking resemblances to what some of the artists of *Direction 1* were doing. Therefore, although Robert Hughes said that this was long before students frantically scanned the 'tipsheets for the Parnassus Sweepstakes like *Art International*', a mere glance at Passmore's magazine leads to an inescapable conclusion.[44]

But Passmore's regard for abstraction *per se* in 1956 and 1957 turned out to be less than serious. He later referred to them as 'mere jingles',[45] and his lightweight attitude is reflected in a series of abstract gouaches on newspaper which he did during this period. He took pleasure in telling Mary Turner how they would soon fall apart. Some of these surviving works are very sonorous in their colour and balance of shapes and it is a great shame that they may not last. Was this a kind of Dada-esque comment on the ultimate impoverishment of abstraction? It seems unlikely, for even in the most geometric of his patchwork paintings of the time there are references to the glinting lights and reflections of

the seascapes that meant a lot to him.

Passmore was also aware and taken with the idea that the blue ink he was using in his drawing was disappearing rapidly on exposure to light. He recently made a telling comment when he said that Marcel Duchamp had 'infected' him more than people might know.[46] Was he forecasting in 1956 and 1957 the notion that painting for him would soon lose its viability? This disregard for the permanency of his materials had a parallel with the work of Ian Fairweather, whom Passmore cared for more than he did for any Australian artist at the time. If so, it was belied temporarily by one brief but spectacular blossoming of paintings to follow, and which there is no doubt were constructed for posterity.

When the Terry Clune Galleries opened in Macleay Street in 1957, Passmore took a flat on the second floor (see cat. 52). Russell Drysdale was in a flat nearby and the artists were on very good terms with each other. It was a convivial atmosphere and Passmore later acknowledged the help and encouragement Drysdale gave him. Undoubtedly this had much to do with the splendid new series of paintings that Passmore made from 1958 until his departure for Europe in 1960.

These paintings, which might be viewed superficially as abstractions are a summation of Passmore's highest gifts as a painter. His fine sense of tone and subtle handling of pigment, and his innate ability to juxtapose colours so that their resonant qualities are enhanced, are brought into play with a tremulous, almost awkward use of line and shape, to capture the landscape elements he was drawn to. Edges of water where little shafts of light and shadow dart on the surface answer to the shapes of pylons and boats and sky, and the movement of bird and fish. The organic ambience between sea and earth, embracing things above and below, hints at the mystery, the 'otherness' encompassed by Passmore's mind, a fragmentary vision held together by an intensity of imagination that incorporated his whole sense of being. On a note pad in his studio he wrote: "One's art is an ideogram of himself and also the mystery of things."

Some of the paintings were inspired by specific incidents, such as *Jumping horse — mackerel*, purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in the year it was painted, 1959 (see cat. 50). It is interesting to note that the drawings for this composition, inspired by a fishing event seen at Fairy Bower Beach[47] near Manly, are straightforward illustrations, yet the painting is a flat organisation of organic shapes and colours interfused by calligraphic elements that have little figurative reference. It seems that Passmore's drawings did not change dramatically while his paintings were becoming more abstract. It is also interesting to note here that although Passmore's 1956-60 period has been erroneously linked with abstract expressionist terminology insofar as he had never seen American painting at that stage, his war letters refer to his fascination with Monet, whose 'Water-lilies' paintings had been installed at the Orangerie in Paris in 1927 and which were well known to him.

By 1959 he felt the need to get away from Australia and refresh himself with the art of Europe again. In September he exhibited a group of five paintings in the Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The judges were: Mrs H.V. Evatt, Elaine Haxton, Eric Westbrook, Wallace Thornton, Norman Schureck and Hal Missingham. They awarded the scholarship to Passmore, which caused some consternation. Patrick White wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* complaining that it should have gone to a younger artist. Many agreed.

In March 1960 a farewell exhibition was mounted by the Terry Clune Galleries, just prior to his departure. As in his first one-man exhibition at Macquarie Galleries nine years earlier, there were twenty-six paintings. They ranged from *Canal barges, London* (see cat. 2) of 1939 to *Red ochre* (see cat. 51) of 1960. It was enthusiastically reviewed by the *Sydney Morning Herald* critic who noted that Passmore had built his foundations well on Cézanne, but that he had moved forward distinctively, carrying the masters who had influenced him into a synthesis that was his own creation: "With style and vigour he gathers in Cézanne, Rembrandt and Hokusai . . . "[48] Gleeson noted: "Above all there is a kind of apprehension in his work. He paints as though all his senses were extended to their fullest range of receptivity in an effort to understand his apprehension. Vulnerability has given him an extraordinary sensitivity . . . "[49]

He gave a final lecture at East Sydney Technical College, which many students remember vividly not least because of his humour, for with all his seriousness, Passmore had an outstanding comic talent. At a final gathering on sailing day, he symbolically handed over the students, including Margaret Woodward and Valerie Strong (later Olsen) to his favourite protegé, John Olsen. Olsen had recently returned from a three-year period in Europe and was at the zenith of his confidence. Quietly watching proceedings alone from a nearby table was Godfrey Miller, a fellow teacher for whom Passmore had the highest respect but who he felt, predictably, had made the mistake of being too precise in his painting.

The trip was not to be as beneficial as Passmore would have liked. After arriving in Naples in April, he went straight to Rome, then northward to the village of Bricherasio where he stayed in the furnished stable of a villa, owned by an Italian ex-consul to Australia. Nolan had stayed there some years earlier. Passmore became ill and the doctors he saw

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there attributed it to a poor diet over many years which was catching up with him. After spending one day in Milan he moved down to Florence to see Yvonne Audette, one of his students from the Julian Ashton School, and she arranged a little flat where he could live and work.

Audette took him on a trip to Venice and Rome, but had noted since his arrival that he was very sick and pale. His condition grew worse as they travelled, exacerbated by his fanatical desire to see all the paintings he could manage. He would not rest until he had looked at every accessible work by Veronese and Tintoretto, so besotted was he by their colour and grandeur. He had also arranged in Sydney a visa to go to Spain, so that he might see the works of Goya who, along with Rembrandt, had had the most profound effect on his drawing. But it was not to be, for in Florence he collapsed in the street and his mobility was severely restricted. A doctor in Rome prescribed tablets for acute angina and recommended that he go to London for a thorough examination by a cardiologist. This was mid-year.

On the way to London he stopped in Paris where he went to the American hospital and stayed for ten days to gather his strength. In London he received treatment and convalesced at the Jenkins's studio in Chelsea. When his health improved he made contact with some of his old Lintas colleagues and occasional visits to Gooseberry Cottage. The Australian artist Lawrence Daws was living in London and Passmore enjoyed discussions with him as they walked on Hampstead Heath near where they both lived.

He saw a little of Keith Vaughan later in the year and through him met Bryan Robertson who had been several months earlier preparing for his exhibition of Australian art at the Whitechapel Gallery. By now Vaughan was moving in more influential and academic circles and Passmore felt rather an outsider. However, he got on well with Robertson and they had a number of long conversations. Passmore was sceptical about Robertson's interest in the American abstract painters and this very likely contributed to a critical change regarding his own work; for when Passmore slipped quietly back into Sydney in late July 1961 he was not the same man nor the same artist he had been when he left.

During the late 1950s Passmore had become appalled at the growing regard for art as merchandise. In spite of the help he had received from the Clunes, and one more exhibition he was to have at Macquarie Galleries in August 1960, the newly emerging dealer system in Australia disturbed him. But he had to cope with it, and a man he befriended who tried to help him was the collector Norman Schureck, whom he had probably met through the Rubinstein Scholarship. Schureck bought some of his works, but also offered to help him handle his affairs without working through dealers. Two days after Passmore got back to Sydney, Schureck died, and Passmore was devastated.

Through his sickness Passmore had developed a manic obsession with the fragility of his own health, and now Schureck's death sent him into the deepest depression. As well as this, his position at East Sydney Technical College became precarious. He did not feel well enough to continue, but at the same time was involving himself in furious arguments at the way the College was being run. The medical panel of the Public Service examined his health report from London but left the onus on him to decide how long he could continue. He resigned, his teaching career finishing on the 23rd July 1962. It was the beginning of his withdrawal from the art world and from public life in general.

In 1964, just after Christmas, he made his one and only trip to Melbourne by car with Robert Klippel and a few friends, and stayed for a week with Janet Dawson. Apparently

discomforted by the car and unwilling to contemplate plane travel, he came back alone by ship at the beginning of January. This was about the time he was living in the ground-floor flat and studio of Helen Sweeney's house in Edgecliff.

Sweeney told Donald Friend that she tried to stop Passmore burning bundles of his paintings and drawings in the garden incinerator. This cathartic process was not new to him, but from about 1966, when Passmore left the Sweeney house to move to Waratah Street, it became bound up with the intrigue of his isolation. He told many people over the ensuing years that he was inclined to destroy everything, and none of them knew exactly what he was doing. Was he painting? Was he working? Such an act of destruction would not necessarily signify negation, for Passmore's art has been one of speculation rather than resolution, led ever hopefully by the prospect of the Phoenix.

The last twenty years of Passmore's career are extremely difficult to quantify. He painted some works during the early 1960s of a convulsive, incoherent nature which signified disintegration of vision. Yet recently, in the tape-recorded interviews conducted by Elinor Wrobel in early 1984, he displayed a lucidity and conviction that indicated that he had not given any ground on the ideology of the art process that he had held all his life: "Some part of us wants satisfying in a way . . . if it can get it, and it doesn't always get it, it still wants it. This holds the most unaccountable strength of all things on the earth. One's been trying to probe the secret thing that nature holds all the time before you. And yet what you see is the clothes she's wearing and not the secret."[50] In this, one of his last recorded statements on art, is the clue to why painting became less important to him. It was a cosmetic thing, reflecting merely his physical capacity to manifest a process that had been always fundamentally contained within his mind.

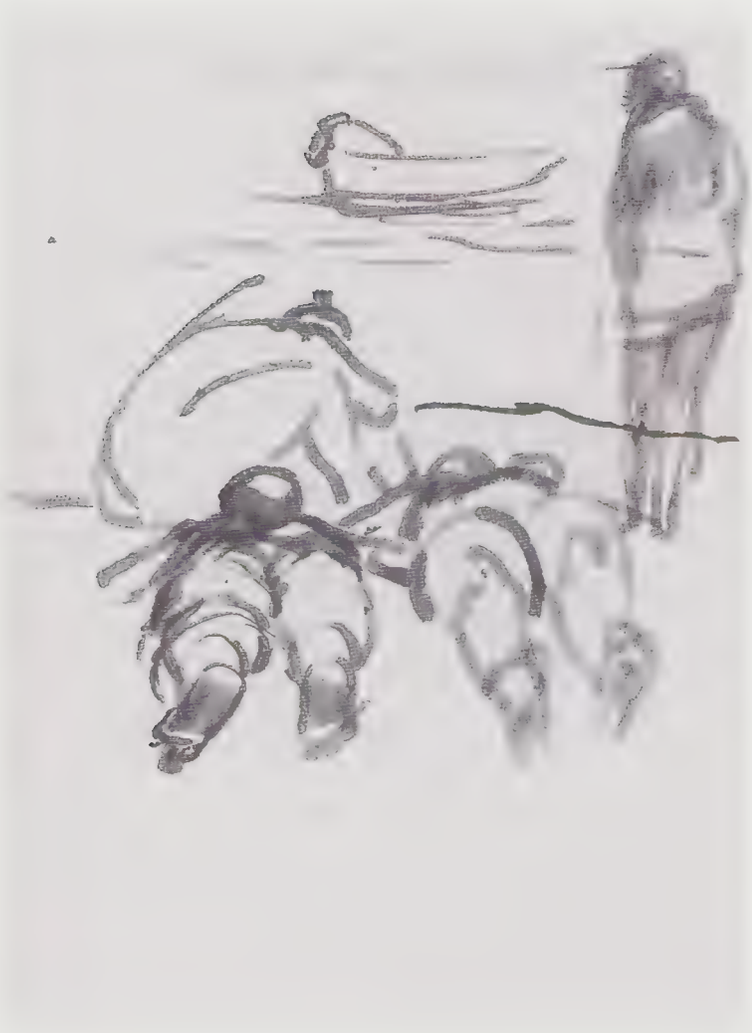
Passmore's isolation was a peculiar state of affairs. It was not total by any means, for until he signed himself over to the Protective Office of the Supreme Court of New South Wales early in 1984, he lived in the centre of a busy metropolis, maintaining frequent contact with people by telephone. But only a select few were allowed into his flat. Nearly always these visitors were confronted with secrecy, works covered with sheets or turned to the walls and rarely any evidence of current painting. In the early 1970s John Henshaw recalled seeing a series of freshly completed works which seemed to be a reversion to Passmore's early bathers paintings, but these disappeared, probably destroyed. He attended some of Henshaw's life drawing classes at East Sydney Technical College in about 1967; later he told Henshaw he had had some good ideas for painting but lacked the inclination to put them down.

When, at the artist's request, the Art Gallery of New South Wales collected his possessions in late 1983, the flat at Bayswater Road contained bundles of drawings and paintings of various periods, with palettes and small colour studies, older unfinished panels with later tentative markings and inscriptions in chalk or charcoal, but little substantial evidence of sustained painting in recent years. Most dominant was the presence of countless scraps of paper, note pads, cuttings and letters onto which Passmore had written his thoughts, records of conversations and quotations from what he had read in magazines, or heard or the radio. They were scattered in disorder across the floor, walls, worktops and even on the bed, about the only concession to furnishing comfort that existed in the whole flat.[51]

Statements from Apollinaire on cubism that he had read during the war mingled with references to musical composers and poets, fragments of autobiography and observations about his diet; many set out on the page so that they would scan like poetry. Given his dislike of articulation, he seemed to have certain words and names always visible so that seeing them over and over they yielded up a meaning to him, for example, the names of Einstein and the ancient mathematicians Pythagoras and Archimedes. Taking these scraps out of context now they have an obscurity of significance, but it is important to remember that since he lost the contact of teaching, Passmore developed more intensely the habit of writing himself notes and quotations. It was a form of self-dialogue which eventually took precedence over painting and became a kind of art process, exactly in the way that he had made teaching an extension of the system by which he confronted problems in his painting and drawing.

His obsessive secrecy and deep distrust of officialdom made the writing of a book or the mounting of a retrospective exhibition on his work impossible, and on a scrap of paper he wrote: "I don't know about a book on me. How could they with no work I've done since about 1962?" More recently he wrote, after finally agreeing to a retrospective: "My view is that there is no point where a work begins or ends, and I show works only between 1951 and 1960 and some painted in England. Now is the time to see where we are going or even if we are."[52]

Passmore's preoccupation with a quasi-mystical thought process which took him outside the limits of painting, or at least became a rationalisation for his lessening capacity with the brush, will continue to be a fascinating source of discussion. For instance, Bernard Smith has said that it is yet to be assessed how far the theosophical movement has influenced painting in Australia, especially from the 1920s in Sydney, when its membership here was the largest in the world, and



cat. no. 58a

the country's earliest key exponents of abstraction were formulating their careers. When asked about this in June 1984, Passmore categorically denied being conscious of any kind of religious or spiritualist doctrine in relation to his investigations.[53]

Contexts do seep into individuals without them knowing, and undoubtedly the paganist atmosphere of Sydney in the 1920s did have an effect on him. Einstein and Freud were avidly discussed and there was a general interest in the movement of the unconscious, allied with a belief in the omnipotent force of nature which was a key to the interconnectedness of all things.

But ultimately the real significance of the mystical element Passmore brought to his work was the extent to which it was highly personalised and the way it counterpointed the inadequacies of his life. Love in its metaphysical essence is the tendency of the self to become selfless, to merge beyond its confines into the larger oceanic state of the continuity of existence. Passmore was unable to approach such a state by conventional relationships in the world of people and things. However, we may see that he held to the hope of transcendence through the nuances of anxiety and ecstasy that are contained in his art.

Notes

1 Letters, Reg Jenkins, 1 May 1944.

2 Ibid., 24 January 1943. The first quote in this paragraph is from Baudelaire's essay on Poe; see Selected Bibliography.

3 Passmore's recollections vary on the precise year; unfortunately the records for this period of the Julian Ashton School are non-existent.

4 Commercial art company established in Sydney by Harry Julius and Sydney Ure Smith, c.1916.

5 Letters, Reg Jenkins, 28 February 1945.

6 Exhibition of 'colour music' or 'synchromies', Gayfield Shaw's Art Salon, Penzance Chambers, 29 Elizabeth Street, 8-16 August 1919.

7 Wrobel tapes 4, 4 March 1984.

8 Ibid.

9 Interview with B. Pearce, 15 August 1984.

10 Lintas is derived from Lever's International Advertising Service, the name created in 1930 when Lever Brothers merged with the Dutch Margarine Union to form Unilever.

11 Recollections, London, Noel Ripley, 4 August 1984.

12 Wrobel tapes 6, 4 March 1984.

13 Recollections, London, Geoffrey Wadlow, 17 August 1984.

14 Passmore papers, The Passmore Trust.

15 Wrobel tapes 12, 10 March 1984.

16 Ibid.

17 Wrobel tapes 7, 5 March 1984.

18 Letters, Reg Jenkins, 8 October 1942.

19 Recollections, London, Geoffrey Wadlow, 17 August 1984. For other information regarding Vaughan, refer to Olsen and Henshaw note 40.

20 Ibid.

21 Recollections, London, Richard Wilson, 22 July 1984.

22 Wrobel tapes 7, 5 March 1984.

23 Ibid.

24 Gertler died in 1939, Meninsky 1950, and Vaughan, who was suffering from terminal cancer, in 1977.

25 Information supplied by Valerie Olsen and Murray Bail.

26 Wrobel tapes 7, 5 March 1984.

27 Recollections, London, Richard Wilson, 22 July 1984.

28 Letters, Reg Jenkins, late 1941. *Jean Christopher* refers to the novel by Romain Rolland which was discussed by Jenkins and Passmore in their letters.

29 Wrobel tapes 8, 5 March 1984.

30 Passmore papers, The Passmore Trust.

31 Recollections, London, Marjorie Jenkins, 2 August 1984. As paraphrased by Emma Hicks in an interview with Mrs Jenkins.

32 Letters, Reg Jenkins, c.April 1942.

33 Letters, Reg Jenkins, c.October 1945.

34 Letters, Reg Jenkins, April 1944.

35 Biographical files, Australian National Gallery Library.

36 Recollections, London, Noel Ripley, 4 August 1984.

37 Passmore papers, The Passmore Trust.

38 *Sydney Morning Herald,* 22 November 1951.

39 *Sun,* 22 November 1951.

40 Interview with John Henshaw by B. Pearce, 10 September 1984; and letter to B. Pearce from John Olsen August 1981. See also transcript of Olsen's lecture in Perth for 1978 Perth Survey of Drawing, The Art Gallery of Western Australia, and transcripts of various interviews with ex-students of Passmore by Pearce and Edwards. Of particular interest is Olsen's remark in the above letter that Passmore looked at the painting by Sickert, *The flower market, Dieppe*, which the Art Gallery of New South Wales had purchased in 1947, and was very influenced by its grey and mauve palette as well as its paint handling and treatment of figures. Note cat. 13 and 15.

41 *The art of Australia* 1966, pp.206, 207.

42 Letters, Reg Jenkins, 28 February 1945.

43 Wrobel tapes 11, 10 March 1984. See also Spate, 1963, p.5: 'Olsen recalls the first conversation he had with Passmore on these ideas. He spoke of his desire to create a picture in which the seaport in all its aspects, from dawn to night, would be evoked; in which, following (Dylan) Thomas's suggestion of the sympathy between man and his environment he could find some way of becoming one with the natural forms he painted. Passmore greeted these ideas with much excitement. He felt that they offered a means of exploring what he saw as a constant preoccupation of the Australian artist: the relationship between man and Australian nature'. Clearly, Olsen and Passmore were not relinquishing their commitment to place for the pure process of painting.

44 op.cit. p.260.

45 James Gleeson, *Robert Klippel* 1983, p.141

46 Wrobel tapes 13, 10 March 1984.

47 Valerie Olsen and other ex-students of Passmore recall that this subject may have been taken from La Perouse. However, the acquisition catalogue of 1959 records a note from Passmore himself stating that it was at Fairy Bower Beach.

48 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 1960.

49 *Sun*, 9 March 1960.

50 Wrobel tapes 18, 17 March 1984.

51 Murray Bail has written an excellent description of Passmore's studio and character in his later years, to be published in the *Age Monthly Review*, December 1984.

52 Passmore papers, The Passmore Trust.

53 Letters between Wrobel and Pearce, June 1984.

John Passmore *Still life 1920s*
oil on canvas 64 x 40 cm private collection

1904
John Richard Passmore born 4 February, Redfern, New South Wales, son of John Passmore and Elizabeth Webber. The family lived in Bloomfield Street, Redfern.

1905
Passmore's sister Alice Mary Beryl born 3 November.

c.1907-11
Passmore family lived at 53 John Street, Woollahra.

c.1910-17
Passmore attended Rushcutters Bay primary school.

1911
The family lived at 9 Paul Street, Lavender Bay.

1912-33
The family lived at 74 Thompson Street, East Sydney. Passmore probably lived with his family until his marriage in 1925.

1914
John Passmore snr. conscripted as a guard to Holdsworthy camp for German interns.

c.1917
Left school to begin work with a signwriter.

c.1917-18
Began work at John Sands Company, entailing drawing on printing machine plates for the production of theatre and film posters.

c.1918-19
Continued to work during the day and began night study Henry Gibbons painting class, at Julian Ashton's Sydney Art School. Frequently attended Saturday night sketch club meetings run by Tom Ferry. The class consisted of approximately twenty students, several of whom, like Passmore, were commercial artists. Continued at the Sydney Art School, with breaks, until 1933.

Passmore, George Lawrence, Roy Davies and Fred Wendt went on painting holidays on the Nepean River, near Richmond.

1919
Visited de Maistre and Wakelin exhibition, *Colour in art*, at The Art Salon, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, August.

early 1920s
Began work as a commercial artist with advertising agency Smith and Julius, where Lloyd Rees and Roland Wakelin also worked. Developed a friendship with Wakelin, who, upon leaving Smith and Julius to go overseas in 1923, gave Passmore a study of the Conservatory, which he subsequently took with him to London.

During his time at the Sydney Art School and until 1932 Passmore taught lettering to students, Tuesday afternoon, 3.30-5.30 p.m.

1925
Married Muriel (nee) Roscoe, 19 December.

1926-33
Lived in Marrickville (1930-33 in Hill Street).

1930-33
Attended Saturday classes only at the Sydney Art School, 1930-31, full time 1932-33.

Son, John Howard born 1 December 1930.

Arthur Freeman awarded 1933 Society of Artists Travelling Scholarship. Passmore departed for England on the ship *Oronsay* c. April-May, working on board as a steward; Freeman departed for England on the *Port Wellington*, Port Kembla, 25 June; Passmore arrived in London 6 July, staying with Dobell, 34 Alexander Street, Bayswater, for several weeks and subsequently moving to 2 Kilgare Terrace, Bayswater. Freeman arrived in London 25 August and after initially staying with Passmore, rented a room in the same building.

1933-34
Passmore began work as a commercial artist with Lintas, where he met Keith Vaughan and Reg Jenkins. From about this time he attended evening classes at the Westminster School of Art, where he took drawing and portraiture under Mark Gertler and Bernard Meninsky.

1934
Passmore and Freeman spent eight days in Paris, April-May.

1935
Passmore and Freeman left London 26 July, for a two weeks painting trip in Germany, travelling down the Mosel River.

First stop in Germany was Trier; other places visited included Zell (three days), Iraben and then by train to Luxembourg.

c.1937
Moved to Gloucester Gardens.

1937 or 1938
Passmore, Haefliger and Bellette travelled to Italy and France for three months; first by train through Italy, to Bologna with stops and detours, then slowly through France, visiting Aix and Cézanne's house.

1939
Moved to 4 Warwick Crescent, near Little Venice, May.

1940
Moved to Gooseberry Cottage, Lindsey Tye, Suffolk, early spring, where he stayed for one year.

early 1941

Left Gooseberry Cottage; conscripted into the Royal Air Force; first based in Scotland, then posted to various parts of Britain until end of the war.

1946
After demobbing, returned to Gooseberry Cottage for one year.

1947
Returned to London, moved into a flat near Little Venice and worked at Lintas until 1950.

1950
Departed for Australia by ship, late December.

1951
Arrived in Sydney, late January, and began teaching at Julian Ashton School.

1952
Living at Wirriwa, 22 Challis Avenue, Potts Point, c. November.

1953
Began teaching part-time, The Kings School, Parramatta, June, for one year.

1954
From 10 May taught painting and drawing full-time at Newcastle Technical College. Lived at The Star Hotel, opposite the College, but maintained a flat in Greenknowe Avenue in Sydney.

1956
Transferred to the National Art School, East Sydney Technical College as a full-time teacher, from 6 February.

c.1957
Moved to a flat-studio on second floor of Terry Clune Galleries building, 59 Macleay Street, Kings Cross, where he stayed until March 1960.

1959
Awarded Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship, September.

1960
Departed for Italy by ship, 11 March; arrived in Naples 9 April; travelled to Rome, Bricherasio, Milan and Florence where he stayed with Yvonne Audette; suffered a mild heart attack; returned to London through Paris; receiving medical treatment October.

1961
Departed for Australia on the *Orcades*, arriving in Sydney late July.

1962
Living at flat 6, 22 Challis Avenue, Potts Point, by January.

Retired from the National Art School, East Sydney Technical College, 23 July.

1963
Judge of 1963 Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship.

c.1965-66
Lived in the house of Helen Sweeney and family at Lynwood, 357 Edgecliff Road, Edgecliff, in a self-contained basement flat.

1966-78
Lived at Park Lane mansions, 5/20 Waratah Street, Rushcutters Bay.

1978
From September, lived at 23/64 Bayswater Road, Rushcutters Bay.

1983
At end of year requested the Art Gallery of New South Wales to collect and store all of his possessions, having complained of frequent burglaries and constant fear of the vulnerability of his work.

1984
In February, Passmore signed himself over to the Protective Office of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. After a period in 'Caritas' at St Vincent's Hospital he lived at Redfern Missionholme for several weeks, thence back to St Vincent's Hospital and was transferred finally to the Stanmore Nursing Home where he died on 9 October. A retrospective exhibition of his work organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales opened in Sydney, 19 December, to tour public art museums in Hobart, Melbourne and Newcastle during 1985.

Selected Exhibitions

Three one man exhibitions appear in text: 1951, 1960 and 1961.

1927
Society of Artists annual exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 10 September-3 October.

1929
Society of Artists special exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 6-20 May.

1931
Society of Artists annual exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 5 September-2 October.

1932
Exhibition of Australian art, Society of Artists, Australian Art Association, Melbourne, Boans Ltd. Perth 8-24 March.

1933
1800-1933, Sydney Art School retrospective exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 1-28 March.

1951
Sydney Group, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 2-14 July; *Society of Artists annual exhibition*, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 1-17 September; *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney 20 November-3 December.

1952
Passmore became a member of the Society of Artists and Contemporary Group.

Blake Prize, Mark Foys Art Gallery, Sydney 12-29 March; *The Contemporary Group*, Farmers Blaxland Gallery, Sydney 23 June-5 July; *Sydney Group*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney 30 July-18 August; *Society of Artists spring exhibition*, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 29 August-15 September.

1953
Society of Artists autumn exhibition, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 1-16 April; *Blake Prize*, Mark Foys Art Gallery, Sydney 9-30 April; *Drawings and prints*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney 28 May-1 June; *Society of Artists annual exhibition*, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 28 August-14 September; *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 1-15 October.

1954
Society of Artists annual exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 12-30 August; *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 22 September-8 October.

1955
Society of Artists annual exhibition, Department of Education Art Gallery, Sydney 11 August-31 September; *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 21 September-5 October.

1956
Contemporary Australian painting, Pacific loan exhibition 2 October-November; *Direction 1,* Macquarie Galleries, Sydney 4-10 December.

1957
Society of Artists drawings and prints exhibition, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 20 February-1 March; *Contemporary Australian paintings*, Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand February-March.

1959
Society of Artists drawings and prints exhibition, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney 28 April-16 May; *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship*, Art Gallery of New South Wales 16 September-11 October.

1960
A farewell exhibition of old and new works by John Passmore, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney opening 9 March; *Group exhibition*, Dickersen, Passmore, Lewers, Molvig, Rose, Gleghorn, Skinner Galleries, Perth May; *Contemporary Australian art*, Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand May; *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney opening 17 August (gouaches).

1961
John Lunghi, John Passmore, Robert Dickersen, Skinner Galleries, Perth 1-14 March; *Recent Australian painting 1961*, Whitechapel Gallery, London June-July.

1962
Recent Australian painting, Arts Council of Great Britain 20 January-10 February.

1963
Australian painting: colonial, impressionist, contemporary, Tate Gallery, London 23 January-3 March.

1967
The Australian painters 1964-66, Mertz collection, Corcoran Gallery, Washington and touring America.

1984-85
Major retrospective organised by Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 19 December-10 February; thence touring Hobart, Melbourne and Newcastle during 1985.

Catalogue

All measurements are given in centimetres, height preceding width. Where possible, titles are as originally exhibited. Titles marked with an asterisk are previously untitled works; dates in brackets are curatorial ascriptions.

1
*Two figures** *late 1930s*

oil on cardboard
29.1 x 38
not inscribed
private collection

2
Canal barges, London 1939

oil on canvas
40 x 51
inscribed l.r: JP/39; verso: Canal Barges, London
1939 J. Passmore
coll: J.O. Fairfax

exhib: *A farewell exhibition of old and new works by John Passmore*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney, March 1960 (1)
reprod: *Art and Australia*. Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1965
as 'Canal Barges, Bruges', p.177, B/W

3
*Self-portrait with head scarf** *c.1940*

oil on canvas
38.3 x 27.5
not inscribed
private collection

4
Three figures *1940*

oil on canvas
35.5 x 45.5
inscribed l.r: JP/1940; verso: 3 Figures
1940 J. Passmore
private collection

exhib: *A farewell exhibition of old and new works by John Passmore*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney, March 1960 (3)
prov: Australian Galleries, Melbourne

5
*Landscape with figures and tree** *early 1940s*

oil on canvas
41 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

6
Trees in landscape *1945*

oil on canvas
70 x 55
inscribed l.r: JP 45
private collection

7
Orange cobalt light, Suffolk, England *1945 or 1946*

oil on canvas
41.3 x 51.3
inscribed l.r: JP 45; verso: ORANGE COBALT LIGHT/
SUFFOLK ENGLAND 1946/J. PASSMORE/LINSAY (sic)
-TYE/GAINSBOROUGH COUNTRY
coll: The Passmore Trust

exhib: *Joseph Brown winter exhibition*, Melbourne, July-August 1975 (62)
reprod: *Joseph Brown* 1975 cat., pl.62 B/W

8
Bathers · *c.1947*

oil on canvas
56 x 67
not inscribed
coll: J.O. Fairfax
reprod: *Art and Australia*, Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1965, p.178, colour

9
*Landscape looking down to a small town** *c.1945*

oil on canvas
36 x 43.5
not inscribed
coll: Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Purchased 1980
prov: Keith Vaughan

10
Up the orchard *1946*

oil on canvas
51 x 61.5
inscribed l.r: JP 46
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Bequest of Lucy Swanton 1982

exhib: *A farewell exhibition of old and new works by John Passmore*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney, March 1960 (5)

11
Up the orchard *1946*

oil on canvas
45.7 x 35.5
inscribed l.r: JP 46
private collection

exhib: *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, November-December 1951 (13); *Fifty years of Macquarie Galleries, The third decade 1945-55*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, May 1975 (36)

Exhibited in Sydney only

12
Dedman Vale *1947* *illustrated opposite*

oil on canvas on hardboard
55.6 x 45.9
inscribed l.r: 47 JP
coll: Harold Greenhill

exhib: *Joseph Brown autumn exhibiton*, Melbourne, March 1977 as 'Painting' (78)
reprod: *Joseph Brown* 1977 cat., pl.78 B/W; *Australian Art Auctions*, June 1981, p.16, B/W
prov: *Australian Art Auctions*, June 1981 (160)

14
Boy and seabird *1951*

oil on hardboard
86.5 x 175.5
inscribed l.r: J. Passmore/Sydney 51
coll: Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Purchased 1976

exhib: *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, November-December 1951 as 'Boy and seagull' (1); *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, October 1953 (34); *Joseph Brown winter exhibition*, Melbourne, 1976 as 'Young Australians at play' (65)
reprod: *Joseph Brown* 1976 cat., pl.65, B/W, cover colour; *The collection of the Australian National Gallery, Art and Australia* special number, Vol. 14, Nos 3 and 4, 1977 as 'Young Australians at play', p.339, colour
prov: Mr and Mrs Paul Haefliger

13
Self-portrait *1951* *illustrated opposite*

oil on hardboard
45.7 x 35.5
inscribed l.r: JP; verso: SELF PORTRAIT/1951/PAINTED AT JULIAN ASHTON'S SCHOOL/DUSK/JOHN PASSMORE
coll: The Passmore Trust

15
The bathers *1951*

oil on hardboard
60.9 x 91.4
inscribed l.r: JP 51
J.G.L. Collection, Melbourne

exhib: *Contemporary Australian art,* Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand, May 1960 (61)
reprod: *Art and Australia*, Vol. 6, No. 2, September 1968, p.119, colour; Christies *Australian paintings*, October 1974 (75), colour
prov: Mr and Mrs Instone; Christies, *Australian Paintings*, October 1974 (75)

16
Bathers *c.1951*

oil on hardboard
48 x 61
not inscribed
coll: Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. Purchased 1980

exhib: *Fifty years of Macquarie Galleries, The third decade 1945-55*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, May 1975 (37)
reprod: *Acquisitions 1977-80* cat., Art Gallery of Western Australia (54) p.7, colour
prov: Ross Mellick

17
Damson summer *c.1951-54*

oil on canvas
51 x 64
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust
reprod: Thomas, *200 years of Australian painting*, 1971
p.64, colour

18
The red rock *1951*

oil on hardboard
91.5 x 61.2
inscribed l.r: J. PASSMORE 51; verso: The Red Rock/
J. Passmore
private collection

exhib: *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney,
November-December 1951 (5)
prov: Douglas Watson

19
Boys under a pear tree *c.1952*

oil on hardboard
56.1 x 66.2
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: University of Sydney Union

exhib: *Society of Artists Spring exhibition*, Sydney, August-September 1952 as 'Hot afternoon' (32)
prov: Macquarie Galleries, Sydney

20
The miraculous draught of fishes *1952*

oil on hardboard
122 x 183
inscribed l.r: John Passmore
private collection

exhib: *Blake Prize*, Mark Foys Art Gallery, Sydney, March 1952 (43); *The Arts Festival*, Olympic Games, Melbourne, 1956 as 'Miracle of the fishes' (100); *Australian painting: colonial, impressionist, contemporary,* Tate Gallery, London, 1963 (165)
reprod: Gleeson, *Modern painters 1931-70*, 1971 pl.22, colour

21
Boys at a waterhole *c.1951*

oil on hardboard
51 x 61
inscribed l.r: JP
private collection

exhib: *One man exhibition*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, November-December 1951 (cat. no. uncertain)

22
Harbourside *1952*

oil on hardboard
61 x 81.5
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Purchased 1966

exhib: *Landfall, The Captain James Cook bicentenary exhibiton of Australian art*, National Gallery of Victoria, April-June 1970
reprod: Hoff and Plant, *National Gallery of Victoria — painting, sculpture, drawing*, 1968 p.183, B/W; Finemore, *Freedom from prejudice*, 1977 pl.44, B/W

23
The Baptism *c.1953*

oil on hardboard
122 x 150.5
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: The University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A. Gift of the Mertz Art Fund

exhib: *Blake Prize*, Mark Foys Art Gallery, Sydney, April 1953 (63); *Contemporary Australian painting*, Pacific loan exhibition, October-November 1956 (77); *Famous paintings from Australian homes*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, May 1957 (31); *The Australian painters 1964-66*, Mertz collection, exhibition touring America, organised by Corcoran Gallery, Washington, 1967 (113)
reprod: Gleeson, *Modern painters 1931-70*, 1971 pl.23, colour
prov: Mr and Mrs Paul Haefliger

24
Strawberry pickers at rest *c.1953*

oil on hardboard
41 x 51
inscribed l.r: JP
private collection

exhib: *Society of Artists annual exhibition*, Sydney, April 1953 (51); *Paintings from the Collection of Mr and Mrs Douglas Carnegie*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne October-November 1966 as 'The strawberry pickers' (65)
reprod: *Art and Australia*, Vol. 4, no. 2, September 1966 as 'The strawberry pickers' p.154, B/W; *Australia Today,* October 10, 1963 as 'Strawberry pickers' p.73, colour
prov: Mr and Mrs Douglas Carnegie

25
Bathers (1951)

oil on hardboard
40.6 x 50.8
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Elder Bequest Fund 1952

exhib: *One man exhibition,* Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, November-December 1951 (3)
reprod: *Bulletin of the National Gallery of South Australia,* Vol. 14, No. 2, October 1952, B/W

26
Orange dot *1953*

oil on hardboard
50.8 x 61
inscribed l.r: JP; verso: Orange dot — John Passmore 1953
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1953

reprod: Badham, *A gallery of Australian art*, 1954 pl.61, B/W; *Aspects of Australian art*, cat., Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976 (58), B/W

27
Boys bathing *c.1953*

oil on hardboard
47.3 x 62.5
inscribed l.r: Passmore
private collection

exhib: *The Arts Festival*, Olympic Games, Melbourne 1956 (101)
reprod: Lawson's *Australian and European prints and drawings*, March 1983, p.21, B/W
prov: Robert Shaw; Lawson's *Australian and European paintings, prints and drawings*, March 1983 (142)

28
*Sketch for bathers** *c.1954*

oil on hardboard
40.9 x 51
inscribed l.r: J. Passmore
coll: The Kings School, Parramatta

29
Evening at Millers Point *c.1952*

oil on hardboard
44.5 x 59.7
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart. Presented by Friends of the Gallery 1983

exhib: *Joseph Brown winter exhibition*, Melbourne, June 1976 (70); *Joseph Brown spring exhibition*, Melbourne, September 1982 (72)
reprod: Christies *Australian historical and contemporary drawings and paintings*, cat. 1970 (59), colour; *Joseph Brown spring* cat. 1982, colour; *Annual Report 1982-83*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, p.9, B/W; *Art acquisitions 1979-84*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, p.29, colour
prov: Christies *Australian historical and contemporary drawings and paintings*, September 1970 (59)

30
Millers Point, morning *(1952)*

oil on hardboard
50.8 x 61
inscribed l.r: JP; verso: Millers Point, Morning 1952
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1952

exhib: *Sydney Group*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, July 1952 (23); *Retrospective exhibition of Australian Painting*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September-October 1953 (150); *Sydney Harbour*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October-November 1963 (47)
reprod: Hughes, *The art of Australia*, 1970, pl.82, B/W

31
Millers Point *c.1952*

oil on hardboard
55.9 x 67.3
inscribed l.r: JP
Joseph Brown collection
reprod: Thomas, *Outlines of Australian art; the Joseph Brown collection*, 1973, pl.127, colour

Exhibited in Sydney only

32
Poppies, fruit and skull *1953*

oil on canvas on hardboard
45.7 x 61
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1953

exhib: *Society of Artists annual exhibition*, Sydney, August-September 1953 (30); *Contemporary Australian painting*, Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand, February-March 1957 (26)

33
If you don't believe me ask the old bloke *1953*

oil on hardboard
61 x 91.5
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Bequest of Carlyle Greenwell 1961
reprod: *Aspects of Australian art* cat., Art Gallery of New South Wales 1976 (59), B/W

34
The argument *1953*

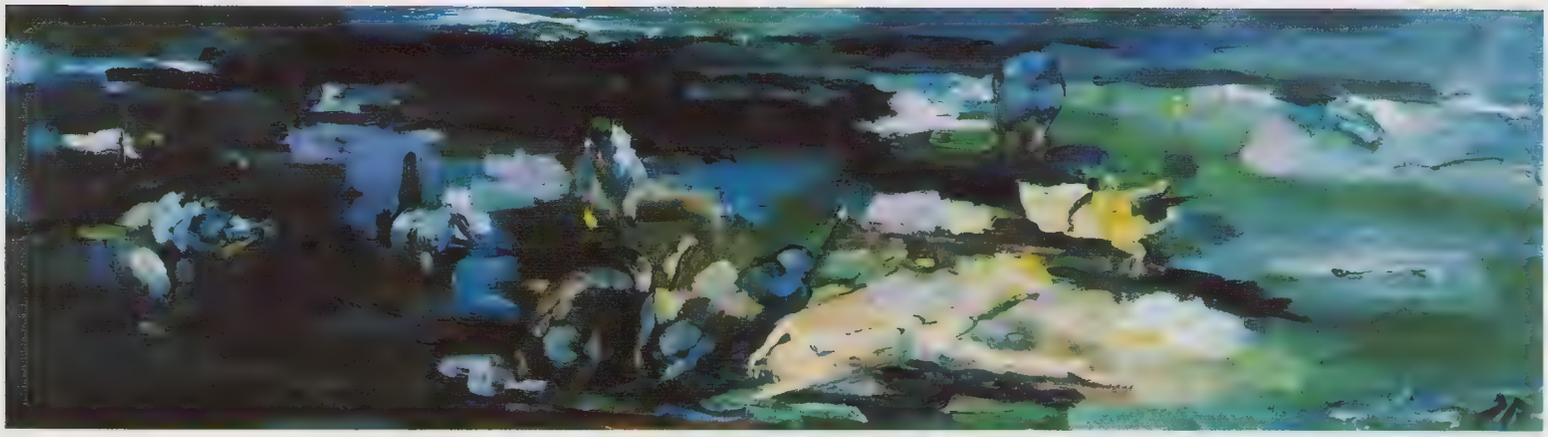
oil on hardboard
28.6 x 73.7
not inscribed
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1953

exhib: *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, October 1953 (36 or 37); *Contemporary Australian painters*, organised by State Galleries of Australia to travel in Canada, 1957-58 (47); *Australian painting: colonial, impressionist, contemporary*, Tate Gallery, London, 1963 (163)
reprod: Bonython, *Modern Australian painting 1950-75*, 1976 p.27, colour and *Modern Australian painting and sculpture,* 1960 p.21, colour; *The studio* Vol. 153, No. 767, February 1957. p.35, B/W

35
The argument *1953*

oil on hardboard
30.5 x 54.5
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Bequest of Carlyle Greenwell 1961

exhib: *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, October 1953 (36 or 37)



36
Boys looking for bait *1954*

oil on hardboard
24.2 x 86.3
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. Gift of Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Fund 1954

exhib: *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, September-October 1954 (30)
reprod: *Western Australian Art Gallery Bulletin,* Vol.1, No.19, April 1966, p.154, B/W; *Western Australian Art Gallery Monthly Feature*, Vol. 4, No. 4, April 1966, colour

. . . I am glad you like Boys looking for bait. The little spontaneous is often still alive when the more ambitious is forgotten. My own first thought that it was too slight has already given way.

The change of context to Newcastle might bring about changes in painting, giving the push to what was ready for happening. Can't say more — uncertainty, providence & jealous guarding of all secrets, without considering all the things heaped on one . . .

John Passmore, letter to Laurie Thomas from the Star Hotel, Newcastle 29 November 1954

37
Chrome yellow *c.1953*

oil on hardboard
35.5 x 45.7
inscribed l.r: JP; verso: Chrome Yellow/John Passmore
private collection

exhib: *Sydney Group*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, September-October 1954 (33)

38
The fish stealer *1954*

oil on hardboard
41 x 85
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Bequest of Carlyle Greenwell 1961
reprod: *Aspects of Australian art* cat., Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976 (60), B/W

39
Sandfight No. 6 *1953*

oil on hardboard
66.5 x 79.2
inscribed l.r: JP/53
coll: Mr and Mrs Neville Gruzman

exhib: *A farewell exhibition of old and and new works by John Passmore*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney, March 1960 (21); *Fourth Anniversary exhibition*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney, December 1963 (15); *Australian art in the 60s*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney,
July 1965 (20); *New trends in Australian art*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney, June 1965 (26)
prov: Norman Schureck

40
Prawn boats IV *c.1954*

oil on hardboard
59 x 74
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Mr G.C. Brown, Brisbane

41
Boys fossicking for mussels *c.1955*

oil on hardboard
55.9 x 66
inscribed l.r: JP
Joseph Brown collection

exhib: *The Joseph Brown collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, October-December 1980 (124)
reprod: *The Joseph Brown collection* cat., National Gallery of Victoria, 1980 pl.124, colour; Thomas, *Outlines of Australian art: the Joseph Brown collection*, 1973 pl.126, colour
Exhibited in Sydney only

42
South wind on the beach *c.1955*

oil on hardboard
71.2 x 91.4
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Australian National Gallery, Canberra.
Gift of James Fairfax 1982

43
Chasing mullet *1956*

oil on hardboard
121.8 x 182
inscribed l.l: J.P. Chasing Mullet/Exhibited Direction 1/1956;
l.r: JP '56
coll: Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.
Purchased with the assistance of the Australian Government
Grant through the Visual Arts Board 1974

exhib: *Direction 1*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, December 1956
(cat. no. uncertain); *Joseph Brown autumn exhibition*, Melbourne,
March-April, 1974 (52)
reprod: *Queensland Art Gallery selected works*, 1982 p.178, B/W

44
Going forward and coming back *1956*

oil on hardboard
35.2 x 45.7
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Graham Ducker
reprod: *Australian Art Auctions*, June 1980 (172), B/W
prov: *Australian Art Auctions*, June 1980 (172)

45
Composition *c.1956*

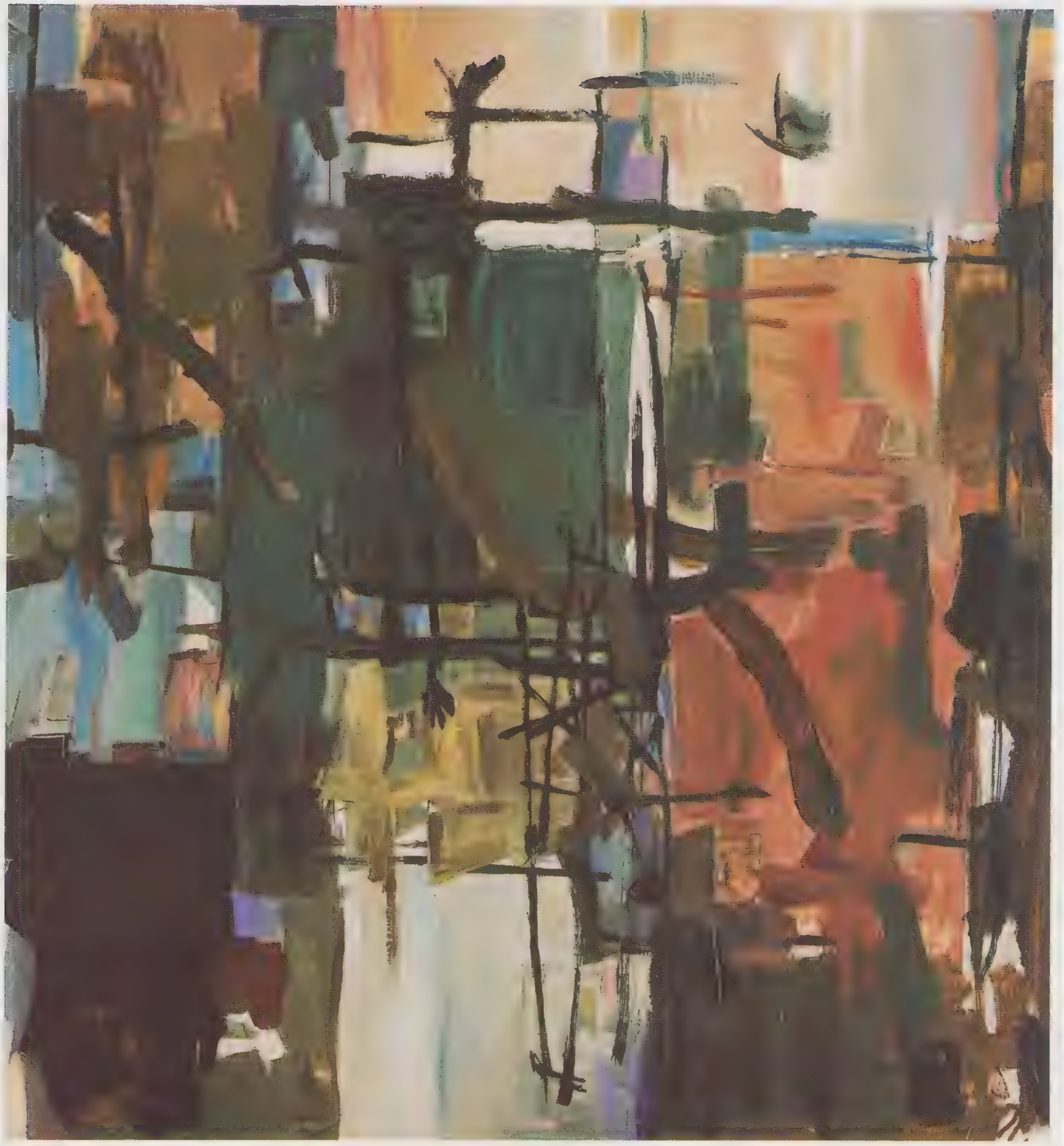
oil on hardboard
91.5 x 152.4
not inscribed
coll: Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth.
Purchased 1957

exhib: *Contemporary Australian painting*, Pacific loan exhibition, October-November 1956 (76); *Australian contemporary paintings* 1958-59, State Art Galleries exhibition of acquisitions, 1960 (2)
reprod: Bonython, *Modern Australian paintings and sculpture*, 1960 p.21, colour; *Western Australian Art Gallery Quarterly Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.19, April 1966, p.156, B/W; *Western Australian Art Gallery Monthly Feature*, Vol. 1, No. 28, September 1960, B/W

46
Abstract Sydney Harbour *c.1957-58* *illustrated opposite*

oil on hardboard
81.2 x 76
inscribed l.r: JP
J.G.L. collection, Melbourne

Exhibited in Melbourne only

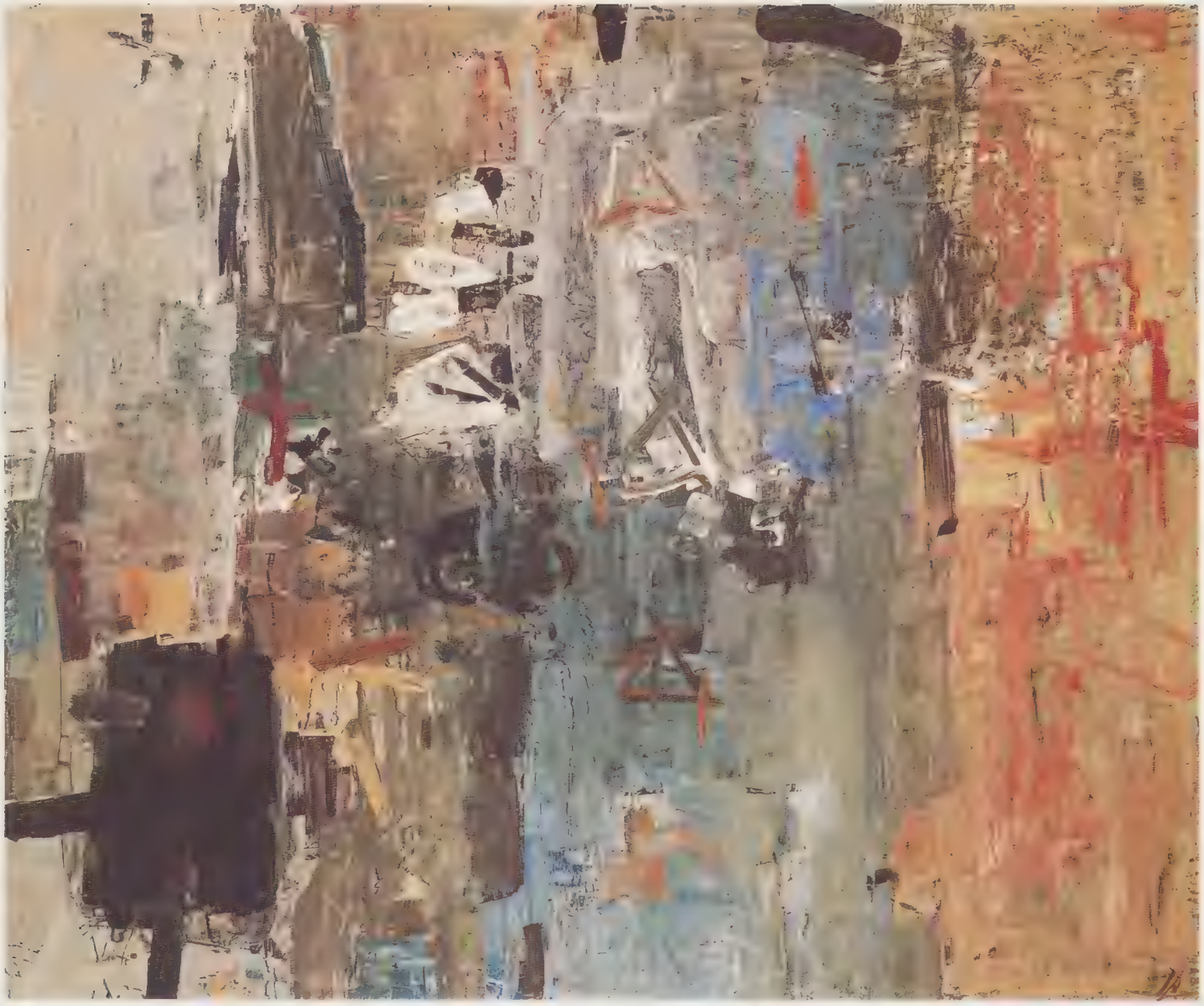


47
Untitled *c.1958-59*

oil on hardboard
77.1 x 81.7
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: University of Western Australia, Perth

48
The seagull *c.1958-59*

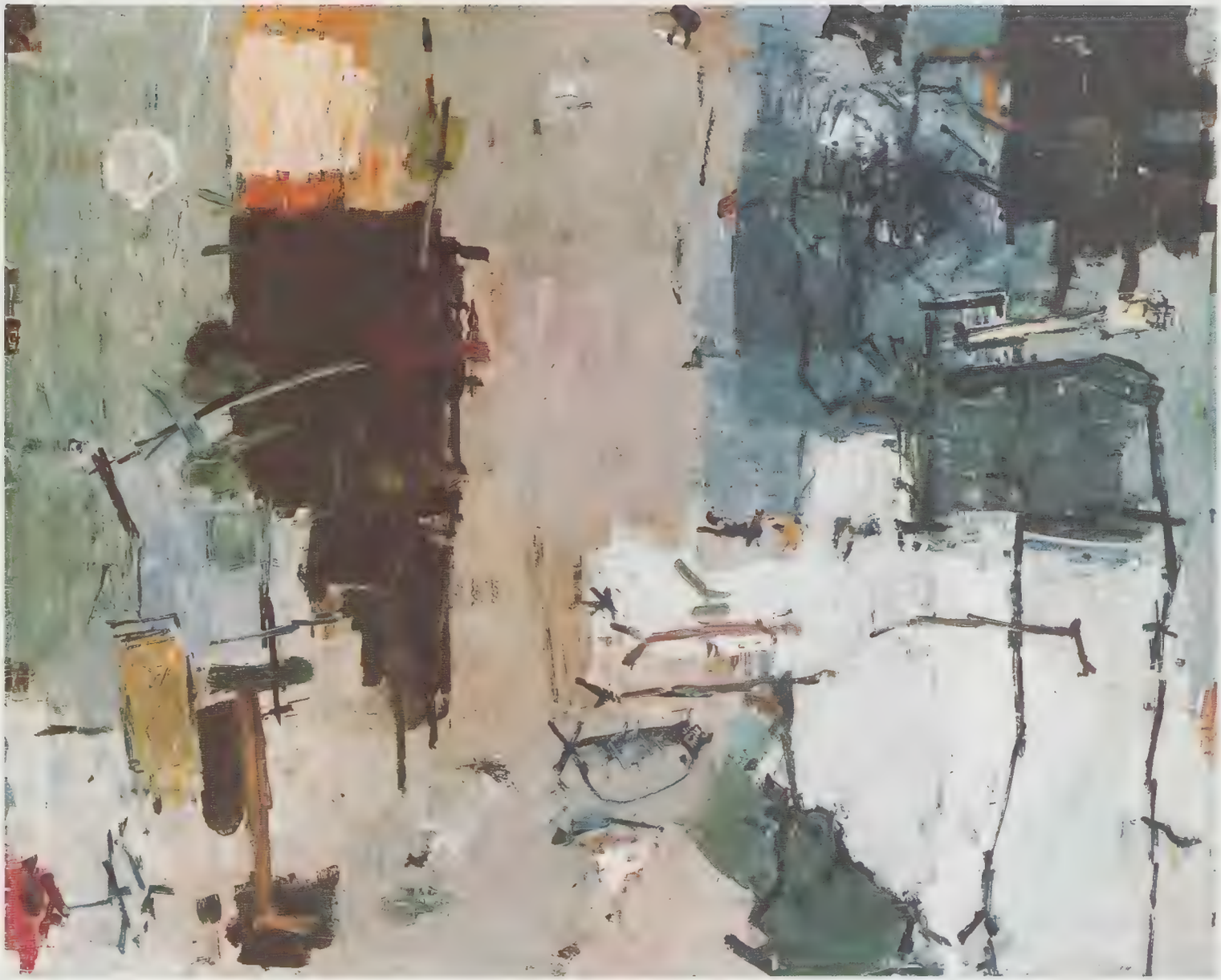
oil on hardboard
59.5 x 74.5
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: The Passmore Trust



49
Shag on scratch *c.1959*

oil on hardboard
76.2 x 91.4
inscribed l.r: JP
Joseph Brown collection

exhib: *The Joseph Brown collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, October-November 1980 (125)
reprod: Thomas, *Outlines of Australian art: the Joseph Brown collection*, 1973 pl.128, colour
Exhibited in Sydney only



50
Jumping horse-mackerel *1959*

oil on hardboard
121.9 x 149.8
inscribed l.r: J. Passmore Sept. 1959
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1959

exhib: *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September-October 1959 (46); *Recent Australian painting 1961*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, June-July 1961 (77)
reprod: *Recent Australian painting* cat., Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1961, pl.1V, B/W; *Art and Australia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1963, p.11, B/W; Hughes, *The art of Australia*, 1970, p.261, B/W; Millar, *Civilized magic — An interpretive guide to Australian paintings*, 1974, p.21, colour

51
Red ochre *1960*

oil on hardboard
107 x 122
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1960, A.H. Smith Bequest Fund

exhib: *A farewell exhibition of old and new works by John Passmore*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney, March 1960 (26); *Recent Australian painting 1961*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, June-July 1961 (78); *Recent Australian painting*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1962 (32)
reprod: Pringle, *Australian painting today*, 1963 p.75, colour; Bonython, *Modern Australian painting 1960-70*, 1970, p.33, colour; *Modern Australian painting 1950-75*, 1976, p.71, colour

52
*Studio interior** *1962*

oil on cardboard
26.7 x 26.7
inscribed l.r: JP/62
coll: Elinor Wrobel

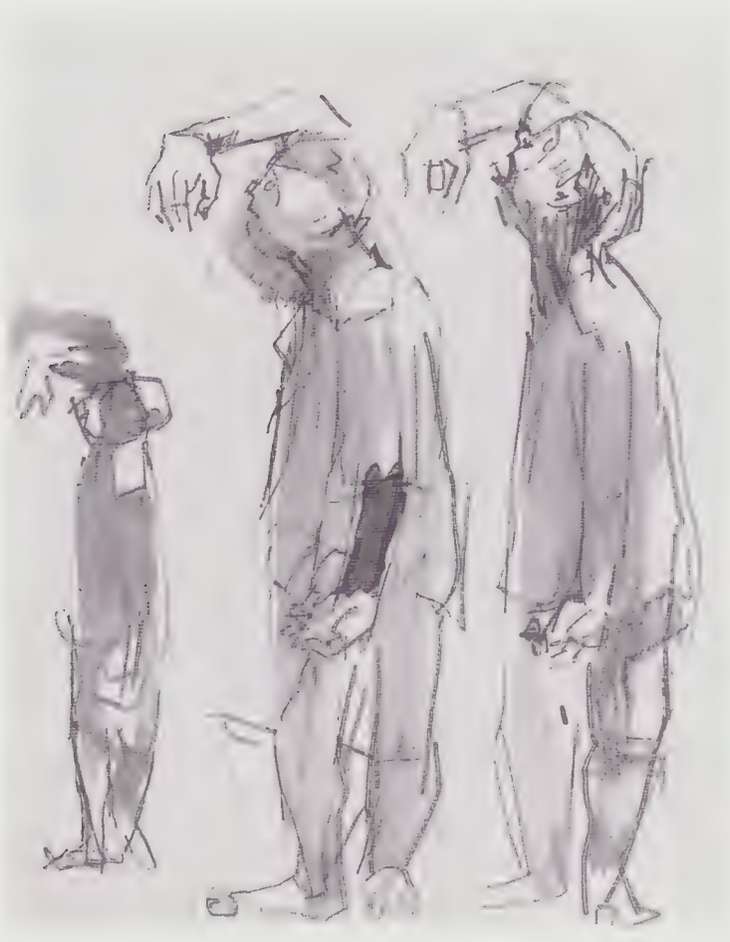
53
Algiers *early 1960s*

oil on plywood
91 x 91.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

54
What do boys of twelve think about? *early 1960s*

oil on hardboard
91.2 x 122
inscribed l.r: JP
coll: The Passmore Trust

Works on Paper



cat. no. 57b

55
*Figure studies** *c.1951*
pen, ink and charcoal
50.2 x 38.2
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

56
*Figure studies** *c.1951*
charcoal
50.5 x 38.2
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

57a
*Organ grinder with monkey** *early 1950s*
reproduced p.15
pen, ink and wash
15.4 x 10.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

57b
*Three figures** *early 1950s*
reproduced this page
pen, ink and wash
14 x 11.2
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

57c
*Figures** *early 1950s*
pen, ink and wash
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

57d
*Three figures** *early 1950s*
pen, ink and wash
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

58a
*Beach scene — figures and boat** *early 1950s*
reproduced p.21
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

58b
*Beach scene — women and child** *early 1950s*
reproduced p.19
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

58c
*Beach scene — towelling dry** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

Study for The Baptism c.1952 cat. no. 64b

58d
*Beach scene — swimmers and spectator** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

59a
*Beach scene — three figures** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

59b
*Beach scene — sunbathing** *early 1950s*
pen, ink and wash
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

59c
*Beach scene — women** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

59d
*Beach scene — drying hair** *early 1950s*
pen, ink and wash
20.5 x 12.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

60
*Group study** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

61
*Group study** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

62
*Boys fishing from pier** *early 1950s*
pen and ink
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

63
*Boy diving off pier** *early 1950s*
pen, ink and wash
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

64a
Study for The miraculous draught of fishes *c.1952*
gouache (on newspaper)
33 x 35 sheet, 27.3 x 33 (comp. irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

64b
Study for The Baptism *c.1952*
reproduced p.83
gouache (on newspaper)
33.4 x 42.3 (sheet), 28.2 x 40 (comp. irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

65a
Study for The Baptism *c.1952*
gouache (on newspaper)
32.6 x 42 (sheet), 26.5 x 38.5 (comp. irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

65b
Study for The Baptism *c.1952*
oil
41.5 x 50.9 (sheet), 26 x 39 (comp. irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

66
Boys swimming in Sydney Harbour *1953*
pen and ink
41.5 x 51
inscribed l.r: JP 1953; l.c: Boys swimming in Sydney Harbour/John Passmore/1953
coll: The Passmore Trust

67
*Wharves** *c.1953*
oil
41.5 x 51 (sheet), 37.8 x 50 (comp. irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

68
*Figure studies** *c.1953-54*
pen, ink and wash
50.2 x 38 (irreg)
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

Boys fishing c.1954 cat. no. 71

Wind and rain c. 1955 cat. no. 73

69
*Figure studies — men on wharves** *c.1954*
pen and ink
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

70
*Unloading the catch** *c.1954*
pen and ink
53 x 76
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

71
Boys fishing *c.1954*
reproduced p.85
pen, ink and wash
39.4 x 50.3
not inscribed
coll: Australian National Gallery, Canberra.
Purchased 1983

72
The end of the picnic *c.1955*
pen, ink and wash, laid down on cardboard
40.8 x 50.9
inscribed l.c: John Passmore
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1956
exhib: *Prints and drawings*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, May 1956 (12)

73
*Wind and rain** *c.1955*
reproduced p.86
pen and ink
19.5 x 25.5
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

74
*Figures playing with ball** *(1956)*
gouache (on newspaper)
42.2 x 60
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

75
Abstract *(1956)*
reproduced p.88
gouache (on newspaper)
42.2 x 60
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

76
Gouache No. 6 *1956*
gouache (on newspaper)
59.6 x 83.5
inscribed l.r: J. Passmore/1956
private collection

77
*Fishermen** *c.1956-57*
watercolour, pen and ink
40.5 x 57
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

78
Study for The basket boys *1958*
watercolour, pen and ink
14 x 11.2
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

79
The basket boys *1958*
watercolour, pen and ink
laid down on cardboard
40.7 x 50.5
inscribed l.r: J.P. 58
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1959
exhib: *A Christmas exhibition*, Terry Clune Gallery, Sydney, 1959 (3)

80
Untitled *c.1958*
pen, ink and wash
41.5 x 51
not inscribed
coll: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.
Purchased 1982 (public donation fund)
prov: Margaret Roxburgh

81
Untitled *1958*
reproduced p.90
pen, ink and wash
53.2 x 76.2
inscribed l.r: JP 58
coll: Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth.
Purchased 1978

82
Untitled *1958*
pen, ink and wash
50 x 74.5
inscribed l.r: J.P /58
private collection

Abstract (1956) cat. no. 75

83
Boy with big fish *1958*
pen, ink and wash
laid down on cardboard
40.8 x 50.5
inscribed l.r: J.P./58
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1959
exhib: *A Christmas exhibition*, Terry Clune Gallery, Sydney, 1959 (2)

84
Jumping horse-mackerel *1959*
pen, ink and wash
laid down on cartridge paper
40.8 x 49.6
inscribed l.r: J.P./JP
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1964
reprod: Millar, *Civilized magic — An interpretive guide to Australian paintings*, 1974 as 'Study for Jumping Horse-mackerel' p.22, B/W

85
Jumping horse-mackerel No. 2 *1959*
pen, ink and wash
laid down on cardboard
40.5 x 56.4
inscribed l.r: J.P. 59
coll: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
Purchased 1959
exhib: *Society of Artists drawings and prints exhibition*, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, April-May 1959 (34)

86
Jumping horse-mackerel No. 4 *1959*
pen, ink and wash
62.5 x 89
inscribed l.r: JP 59
coll: Mrs Judy Lewis

87
The sea No. 1 *1959*
pen, ink and watercolour
53.1 x 76
inscribed l.r: JP 1959
coll: Australian National Gallery, Canberra.
exhib: *Joseph Brown winter exhibition,* Melbourne, June 1971 (27)
reprod: *Joseph Brown*, 1971 cat., (27) B/W

88
Night at Watson's Bay *c.1962*
watercolour, pen and ink
53 x 76
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

89
*Abstract** *1962*
oil on newspaper on hardboard
107.2 x 145
inscribed l.r: 26/V1/62; 62
coll: Mr and Mrs Neville Gruzman
Exhibited in Sydney only

90
*Building in Challis Avenue** *early 1960s*
charcoal and watercolour
53 x 76
not inscribed
coll: The Passmore Trust

Untitled 1958 cat. no. 81

I think it's one of the big tragedies that man is such an ordinary fellow. I feel most when I'm so still . . . and so much being enticed towards a state of being that I want. And the state of being is not an ordinary state of being. I would feel inclined to say . . . don't say anything. Just be very still.

I find that I do my best work when I feel all the warmth that my thoughts now bring upon me.

What am I? I have a brush, I have colours, I see, I smell flowers. One answer to that question is that we're all different. It throws an enormous mystery before your eyes and your feelings.

John Passmore, Wrobel tapes 14, Sydney 10 March 1984

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Joanna Coleman. 'Towards abstract expressionism: the avant-garde in Sydney 1950-61', *Art Gallery of New South Wales Annual*, Vol. 1 1974-75
Maud Lavin. 'Roger Fry, Cézanne, and mysticism', *Arts Magazine*, United States of America, Vol. 58, p. 7, September 1983
Murray Bail. 'Passmore's isolation', article written for the occasion of the retrospective and published in the *Age Monthly Review*, Melbourne. December 1984

Letters. From the artist to various correspondents, late 1930s to 1980s. Most in possession of correspondents or their descendants; others held in the artist's biographical file at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and in the Passmore papers held by The Passmore Trust

Recollections. Written notes by colleagues, ex-students and friends of the artist submitted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales for research purposes; also transcripts of interviews of same by Emma Hicks (London), and Barry Pearce and Deborah Edwards (Sydney)

Biographical files. Specific files held on the artist by the respective libraries of the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, and The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

Newspaper clippings and catalogues, Library of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Official records. Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in New South Wales; Department of Further and Technical Education of the Department of Education of New South Wales; Sands Directory, Mitchell Library; Julian Ashton School, Sydney

Passmore papers. Held in the Passmore Trust, comprising letters and other writings by the artist, as well as various documents from the early 1950s to 1984

Wrobel tapes. Several hours of discussion with the artist concerning his life and opinions, tape-recorded by Elinor Wrobel during March 1984, whilst Passmore was in St. Vincent's Hospital thence at Sydney City Mission in Redfern. These tapes are the property of Mrs Wrobel.

Acknowledgements

It is unfortunate that John Passmore died before he could witness his retrospective. I believe that in the end he would have been greatly moved to survey the finest work he has produced over his career. Much of it he would not have seen since it left his hands many years ago. I was introduced to the artist by Rudy Komon in July 1980 and on that occasion the present project was mooted. Over the next three years we had long discussions and at the end of 1983 he gave me complete access to his collection and private papers. I am deeply appreciative of his trust which I know was never given lightly.

Deborah Edwards, newly appointed Assistant Curator of Australian Art, prepared the catalogue entries, chronological notes and exhibitions list for this publication. I am grateful for her timely, professional help on the whole project. I thank Emma Hicks for her work on the Gallery's behalf in London, interviewing a number of Passmore's past Lintas colleagues and friends. Marjorie Jenkins, Felix Kelly, Richard Wilson, Geoffrey Wadlow, Ken Wickham, Jack Duke, Noel Ripley and Bryan Robertson in England willingly gave of their time and reminiscences. Mr William Parsons at the Agent-General's office in New South Wales House in London facilitated my communication with Ms Hicks and Mrs Jenkins, for which I am grateful.

Many Australians who knew Passmore from early days in Sydney and London have made a contribution; including Arthur Freeman, Pomp Grant, John Brackenreg, Jack Kilgour, Dorothy Dundas, Nora Heysen, Elaine Haxton, Jean Bellette and Hal Missingham. Information has also come from Passmore's Australian students and associates from his teaching periods in Sydney and Newcastle, namely John Olsen, John Henshaw, Yvonne Audette, Yvonne Jabour, William Rose, Norma Allen, Judy Lewis, Jeffrey Smart, Margaret Woodward, Valerie Olsen, Susan Tooth, Edward May, Colin Lanceley, William Wright, Keith Looby, Ann Thomson and Barbara McKay. I would especially like to thank Robert Klippel who, along with Bill Rose gave me his time to discuss the *Direction 1* period in particular.

Murray Bail was most generous in giving me his notes recording various conversations he had with Passmore over the past ten years or so. He also prepared at my request an essay on the artist for possible inclusion in this catalogue along with contributions from others, but unfortunately the overall material submitted was far longer than anticipated, and for budgetary reasons could not be published. Commercial gallery dealers were, as usual, supportive in notifying me of the locality of works: Eileen Chanin of Macquarie Galleries; Gwen Frolich of Rudy Komon Art Gallery; Barry Stern; Dennis Savill; Philip Bacon; Mrs Scheinberg of Holdsworth Galleries; Jan Martin of Lyttleton Galleries, and Sue Hewitt of Christies. Especial thanks to Joseph Brown who has given long-standing support to Passmore's work over many years; to Treania Bennett and Mary Turner, both of whom through their past association with Macquarie Galleries had useful reminiscences, and to Christopher Sweeney. Elinor Wrobel, who was closer to Passmore than anyone else in his last two years, has been helpful and supportive.

After the Gallery collected Passmore's possessions at his request at the end of 1983, I suggested to Mrs Wrobel that she attempt to conduct tape-recorded interviews with the artist — which she did successfully — and those recordings have become invaluable archival material. Thanks to all the Directors and staff of public art museums and private collectors who have sacrificed their time and possessions to make this exhibition possible; and to Lou Klepac, whose Beagle Press has produced this publication. Thanks to Bridgette Macarthur for her research assistance. Finally, but not least in significance, there are the other staff of the Art Gallery of New South Wales who have made an invaluable contribution to the whole project: the Registrar, Ljubo Marun; Alan Lloyd and his conservation staff; Rita Matthews for her typing, and Kerry Dundas for his fine photography assisted by Ray Woodbury.

Barry Pearce

Author's note:
Some people might wonder why Passmore's painting 'Poppies, lime and glass of water' which was included in the Tate Gallery Exhibition in 1963 is not included in this retrospective. It was left out because Passmore insisted that it must, probably because it was too often reproduced. I promised him that I would respect his wishes.

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